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Juventus' new stadium could hold the key to Italian football getting its house in order

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In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

Fiorellaggf.com

MEXICO...a helicopter carrying a police marksman flies over the TSM Corona stadium in Torreon before the league game between Santos Laguna and Guadalajara. The previous week a shoot-out had taken place just outside the stadium, forcing players and fans inside to take cover

USA...a giant flag is unfurled at the Red Bull Arena, New York, prior to the MLS game between New York Red Bulls and Vancouver Whitecaps, on the eve of the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy

CHILE...Universidad de Chile players try to block a shot from Nacional's Richard Porta in their Sudamericana Cup second-round tie in Santiago

ITALY...Juventus' Emanuele Giaccherini has a shot at goal during their 4-1 win against Parma on the opening day of the Serie A season in the new Juventus Stadium in Turin

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TURKEY...midfielder Arda Turan celebrates his winning goal in the seventh minute of injury time in the Euro 2012 qualifier against Kazakhstan in Istanbul

SPAIN...Barcelona captain Xavi lifts the UEFA Super Cup after the 2-0 win against Porto in Monaco

ENGLAND...Tottenham Hotspur defender Michael Dawson lies distraught as Manchester City's Edin Dzeko (no 10) celebrates his hat-trick with team-mates in the 5-1 win at White Hart Lane

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FROM THE EDITOR

The growing gap between Barcelona, Real Madrid and the rest of La Liga has been discussed at great length in recent months. Television money has ensured the continued supremacy of Spain's top two clubs but Malaga, backed by Qatari money, may be about to change that.

Whether Malaga can launch a sustained challenge while also complying with UEFA's Financial Fairplay regulations remains to be seen. Michel Platini and UEFA insist that clubs must comply with the new rules, yet his organisation continues to pump prize money into the continent's top clubs – Barcelona received €51million from UEFA last season. It's a complicated storyline that will run all season, and to which we will inevitably return.

> UEFA insists clubs must comply with Financial Fairplay but continues to pump prize money into the continent's top clubs

Meantime, there's plenty to catch up on. We preview the final five qualifiers for the Champions League group stages and also look at the national teams that have already made it to the finals of Euro 2012. Next month, we'll review the Euro qualifying campaign and preview the Euro 2012 play-offs. See you then.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. Germany, Holland, Spain and Italy qualify for Euro 2012 ➤ Pages 28, 30, 31 and 43
2. Malaga explain their long-term plan to challenge Barcelona and Real Madrid ➤ Page 56
3. New-look Libya still hold out hope of qualifying for the African Nations Cup ➤ Page 32
4. Samuel Eto'o joins Russian club Anzhi Makhachkala ➤ Page 14
5. Ronaldinho returns to the Brazil national team ➤ Page 10
6. APOEL, BATE, Dinamo Zagreb, Plzen and Trabzonspor qualify for the Champions League group stage ➤ Pages 90 to 94
7. UEFA president Michel Platini warns of "red lights flashing" in football ➤ Page 64
8. New Juventus stadium opens with a friendly against Notts County ➤ Page 22
9. Swiss club Sion head for legal showdown with UEFA ➤ Pages 34 and 72
10. FIFA ExCo member Worawi Makudi is under the spotlight over property deals ➤ Page 9

SPAIN

Mourinho under fire for eye-poking attack

Eye attack...Mourinho is caught on camera

Real Madrid coach Jose Mourinho started the season in provocative style after a touchline clash with Barcelona assistant coach Tito Vilanova during an ill-tempered Spanish Super Cup.

Barcelona won the match 3-2 on aggregate, courtesy of a late Lionel Messi goal, while Madrid had Marcelo sent off – an event which sparked chaotic scenes on the touchline as staff from both benches clashed and Madrid substitute Mesut Ozil was also dismissed.

Later, video footage was released that clearly showed Mourinho poking Vilanova in the face.

The brawl was followed by a war of words between Mourinho and Barcelona's players. "Mourinho is destroying Spanish football," said Barca defender Gerard Pique.

EGYPT

Bradley set for new national job

Former United States coach Bob Bradley was set to be announced as the new national coach of Egypt after agreeing a deal with the Egyptian Football Association.

Bradley, who was also a candidate to take over as coach of Mexican club Santos Laguna, was sacked by the US in July after his side were beaten by Mexico in the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Egypt, the reigning African champions, parted company with Hassan Shehata after a poor start to their qualifying campaign means they will not be in Gabon and Equatorial Guinea next year to defend their title.

African challenge ...Bradley

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"What do we ask of players today? That they run quicker and jump higher. We've forgotten the basis of the game: the work with the ball"

Veteran midfielder Jerome Leroy of French club Evian offers the ultimate home truth

THAILAND

ExCo member in spotlight over property deals

Worawi Makudi, the FIFA executive committee member from Thailand, is facing questions over a potential conflict of interest after he was alleged to be the owner of a plot of land that has been redeveloped as a national training centre using funds from FIFA's Goal Project.

The Thai FA received two grants of $400,000 each, in 2003 and 2006, to enable the building of a new national football centre and FA headquarters in Nong Chok, a suburb 40 kilometres outside Bangkok.

Makudi has claimed that he signed ownership of the land over to the Thai FA, but land-registry documents seen by Swiss newspaper *Handelszeitung* suggested that he still has a mortgage of £300,000 taken out on the land.

The site in Nong Chok has also been mooted as a possible site for a proposed academy for ASPIRE, the Qatari football development programme.

Makudi, along with fellow ExCo member Manilal Fernando from Sri Lanka, accompanied Mohamed Bin Hammam at his meeting with members of the Caribbean Football Union before the FIFA presidential election in May. He is believed to have voted for Qatar to host the 2022 World Cup.

Investigation...ExCo member Makudi

HEROES & VILLAINS

ERNST TANNER

Hoffenheim's general manager rescued his neighbour who was trapped under the rear wheels of her Mercedes car. Tanner, with the help of two dustmen, lifted the car away from her. The car was thought to have rolled forward as she was closing the garage door.

Loyal...Ceni

ROGERIO CENI

Made his 1,000th appearance for Sao Paulo in their recent 2-1 win against Atletico Mineiro in front of 60,000 fans at the Morumbi stadium. He made his debut for the club in 1992.

JOHN OBI MIKEL

Played in Chelsea's first two Premier League fixtures even though his father had been kidnapped in Nigeria. Michael Obi was eventually released by his captors.

TEAONUI TEHAU

The Tahiti striker scored six times in 17 minutes as his country beat Kiribati 17-1.

Six of the best...Tehau

LA LIGA

Radio reporters were locked out of the opening weekend fixtures in Spain after broadcasters declined to pay a new fee of €15million to transmit matches live.

MAURIZIO ZAMPARINI

The Palermo president fired coach Stefano Pioli before he even took charge of a competitive game. Pioli only took over at the end of last season. Zamparini was reported to want Delio Rossi to return to the club to succeed Pioli, despite firing him twice last season.

Missed chance... Earnshaw (right)

ROBERT EARNSHAW

His miss against England when faced with an open goal denied Wales a draw against their neighbours, who are ranked 113 places higher by FIFA. A new word in the football lexicon: doing an Earnshaw.

More changes... Chagaev (Centre)

BULAT CHAGAEV

Despite, as reported in last month's *World Soccer*, saying that Neuchatel Xamax would not sack anymore coaches this season, the Chechen businessman in charge of the Swiss club dismissed his fourth coach since May. Joaquin Caparros was booted out after just five games – of which Neuchatel were unbeaten in four.

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"Gignac is really hungry. And contrary to what some think, he takes greater pleasure scoring goals than eating"

Marseille midfielder Benoit Cheyrou defends team-mate Andre-Pierre Gignac for allegedly losing control of his weight

BRAZIL

Ronaldinho's return eases pressure on Menezes

One superbly struck late free-kick rolled back the years and forced an excellent save from young goalkeeper Adam Kwarasey. Another was turned round at the near post. There were also some intriguing corners. But, from open play, Ronaldinho struggled to get into Brazil's friendly against Ghana at Fulham's Craven Cottage in September.

Towards the end, with the Africans down to 10 men and wilting, the former World Player of the Year found the space to send in a couple of dangerous crosses, but in general the 31-year-old was unable to reproduce the form he has been showing for Flamengo in the Brazilian championship.

National coach Mano Menezes commented after the game that the rhythm of international football was more intense than that of domestic Brazilian football and Ronaldinho had felt the difference. It was an indication that the player's spell in the squad may well be curtailed before the 2014 World Cup. But even if that proves to be the case, his recall has served a purpose in helping to ease the pressure on the coach at an important moment.

Menezes declared himself "partially satisfied" with his team's 1-0 victory, even though "relieved" might have been a better word. It was a comfortable triumph, especially after Ghana had left-back Daniel Opare sent off 10 minutes before half-time. Brazil overcame a shaky start, with Ghana's Derek Boateng running things from midfield, and an early injury to playmaker Paulo Henrique Ganso was a blessing in disguise. With Ganso, Ronaldinho and Neymar operating behind goalscorer Leandro Damiao, Brazil were looking top heavy. Ganso's replacement by Elias gave the team an extra man in midfield. With Boateng being closed down, Brazil took control and should have won by a wider margin.

The important thing, though, was that they won. A disappointing Copa America and defeats to Argentina, France and Germany had left Menezes in the firing line. From here on the opposition looks easier, with friendlies against Italy and Spain scrapped. Instead Brazil will travel to face Mexico, Costa Rica and Gabon. Next year it should be well within their capabilities to win the gold medal at the London Olympics, so Menezes has a great chance to pick up momentum and gain prestige on the road to the next World Cup.

Struggle...Ronaldinho returned to the Brazil side but found things hard against Ghana

Soon there will be the chance to stage more matches at home as Brazil will be able to use FIFA dates to get their Europe-based players back across the Atlantic while the other South American sides are busy with World Cup qualifiers. Finding opponents should be easy enough, with teams looking for a sneak preview of what to expect in 2014.

"Playing in Brazil is different from playing abroad," says Menezes. "The crowd are much more impatient and we need to get used to it."

Beating Ghana strengthens the coach's position as Brazil move towards the fascinating next phase of their World Cup build-up – and that should mean, for the time being at least, Ronaldinho coming along for the ride.

Tim Vickery

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"The coach gives the directions, the players have to follow"

Wolfsburg boss Felix Magath (right) fines strikers Patrick Helmes and Mario Mandzukic for not tracking back enough

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see clips of these goals, visit **www.worldsoccer.com**

1 PAT SULLIVAN
Shamrock Rovers v Partizan Belgrade
A spectacular equalising volley for the Irishmen on their way to the upset of the Europa League play-off round.

2 KEVIN STROOTMAN
Holland v Finland
Brilliantly executed left-foot volley, following a pinpoint pass by Wesley Sneijder.

3 FARID CHEKLAM
Najran v Al Fateh
A thunderbolt of a free-kick that gave the goalkeeper no chance.

4 EDEN HAZARD
Lille v Saint-Etienne
Shows great close control to get past three defenders before finishing superbly with the outside of his boot.

5 ANTHONY MOUNIER
Nice v Toulouse
A dipping left-footed volley from 25 yards.

6 MAYA YOSHIDA
VVV Venlo v PSV Eindhoven
The Japan centre-back produces an acrobatic bicycle kick from just inside the penalty area.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Sunderland "baffled" by shock Gyan move

Sunderland have admitted that striker Asamoah Gyan's shock move to UAE side Al Ain on a season-long loan was "baffling".

Chairman Niall Quinn says: "Steve Bruce, our owner and the board all found the football decision baffling, but as chairman I decided this deal was in the best interests of our club."

Quinn revealed the Ghana international could be welcomed back to the club next year, adding: "The olive branch is now there for Asamoah, but he will need to convince Steve [Bruce], the board and every Sunderland fan of his commitment to this club if he is to return."

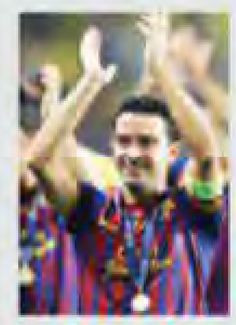
Asked why he left Sunderland, Gyan said: "It's a challenge to me. I made a decision with my family. The Asian league it is improving very well."

Gyan was reported to have tripled his wages to £125,000 a week, while Sunderland received a £6million fee for the loan. The 25-year-old joined Sunderland from Rennes in August 2010 for a club record £13m.

WINNERS

ARMENIA
A 4-0 victory away to Slovakia has left Vardan Minasyan's team on the brink of securing a place in the Euro 2012 play-offs.

XAVI
Became the most decorated player in Barca history when the UEFA Super Cup gave him an 18th winners medal.



SPAIN
Set a new record with their 20th consecutive victory in European and World Cup qualifiers.

ROMA
Luis Enrique's team lost on aggregate to Slovan Bratislava and failed to qualify for the Europa League group stage.

NORTH LONDON
Spurs and Arsenal conceded 13 goals on the same weekend to the Manchester clubs, City and United.

EGYPT
The defending African Nations Cup champions failed to qualify for next year's tournament, missing out for the first time in more than 30 years.

LOSERS

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"Apart from a couple of experienced campaigners, we intend to build a young, competitive side"

New Roma owner Thomas DiBenedetto announces a rejuvenated future for the *Giallorossi* – one which does not seem to include club standard bearer Francesco Totti

POLAND

"Only bad luck or injury can stop my son being the world's best goalkeeper"

Maciej Szczesny is one of Polish football's most colourful personalties. As a goalkeeper he won the league five times with four different clubs and played in two Champions League campaigns. When he finished playing he became a photographer, TV pundit and goalkeeping coach. Now, however, he is routinely described as "father of Wojciech".

At 21, Arsenal's Wojciech Szczesny is the first-choice keeper for both his country and his club, and his father believes he is destined for great things.

"With his skills, bravery, intelligence, self-confidence, excellent reflexes and physical conditioning, he has everything to soon be one of the best keepers in the world," says Szczesny senior. "Only bad luck or serious injury can stop him."

Having initially been more interested in taking dance classes – "It helped him a lot in his career; thanks to that he is now excellently prepared in respect of gymnastic manageability and jumping ability," says older brother Jan – Wojciech had no great desire to become a keeper like his father when he joined his first team, Agrykola, a youth football club in Warsaw.

"I was the youngest on the courtyard and older boys always told me: 'Hey, kid, keep goal,'" he recalls. "But when I joined Agrykola I was a striker. One day a coach, partly by accident and partly because of my physical condition, wanted me to play in goal."

His father claims he could always see which position suited his son best, explaining: "I remember when he was six-years old and he played with boys 10 years older. If he decided to go in goal, of course he tried to save their shots. He never closed his eyes or turned his head.

"After a very hard shot, if the ball broke through his hands he would sometimes start to cry because of the pain. But then he would come back and do it all over again. I realised that he had 'something' to be a good keeper."

The young keeper left Warsaw to join Arsenal at 16 and says: "I was not afraid about anything. I knew that it was an unbelievable chance for me and I had to take advantage of it.

"Of course, there were many young players at Arsenal and in the beginning it was not so easy for me, but I was strong enough to handle the pressure."

In 2008 Wojciech broke both forearms when he lost his balance while lifting a heavy weight. Recovery took five painful months, but he returned to full fitness and went on loan to League One side Brentford the following year.

First choice...Wojciech Szczesny is number one for both Arsenal and Poland

Returning to Arsenal last season, he got his chance in the first team after injuries to Manuel Almunia and Lukasz Fabianski, and made his Premier League debut against Manchester United at Old Trafford and his first Champions League appearance against Barcelona. But he says: "Suffer from nerves before such games? I have never felt anything like that. Such important games like against Manchester, Spurs or Barcelona only motivate me in a special way. I feel such positive adrenaline which lets me concentrate in the best way to play."

After every game he phones his father to ask his opinion of his performance. "My dad was always the most rigorous critic of mine," he explains. "But recently he has agreed more and more with my opinions".

The youngster also realises that he owes a great deal to Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger – "the most calm and patient manager I have ever met" – for being where he is today, explaining: "He believes in young players, gives us a chance. I am not sure that I would be at the same point in my career at any other club.

"I talked to Tomasz Kuszczak after the game against Manchester United and he agreed that I was at the best club for my developing. In Manchester you are practically out after one or two mistakes. In Arsenal the boss still believes in your talent."

Dariusz Kurowski

Wojciech's older brother, 24-year-old Jan Szczesny, is also a goalkeeper, with fifth-division Gwardia Warsaw, although his career was brutally disrupted by two serious shoulder injuries and a motorcycle accident in which he damaged an arm and both legs.

"For me now, football is the best way to get back to normal and get pleasure after a difficult experience," says Jan, adding of his younger sibling: "We now have a closer relationship compared to when we were living together and would quarrel over the computer and TV.

"We talk regularly and I enjoy his successes."

Family three...Wojciech (left) and Jan, with their father Maciej

"My aim is simple: to copy Carlos Tevez"

Everton's new Argentinian striker Denis Stracqualursi sets the bar high

■ OBITUARIES

ABDERRAHMANE BELMAJDOUB (1929-2011)

Nicknamed "The Prince of the Parc" during his time with Racing Club de Paris, the midfielder played for France at the 1954 World Cup and later represented Morocco.

Prince...Belmajdoub

Loyal...Rhine

BOBBY RHINE (1976-2011)

The ex-Dallas midfielder died from a heart attack. He played 10 seasons for Dallas before becoming the public face of the club as a well-known broadcaster and announcer.

■ FRANCE

Messi claims another award

Barcelona's Lionel Messi was named Best Player in Europe last season after the Argentinian beat team-mate Xavi and Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo to claim UEFA's new award at a ceremony in Monaco.

The new award was proposed by UEFA president Michel Platini to replace the European Footballer of the Year award, which has merged with FIFA's World Player gala.

The award, which was organised by European Sport Media (ESM), was decided by a panel of 52 journalists, one from each of UEFA's member countries.

Best in Europe...Messi

David CONN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

City can enjoy Etihad's sponsorship for a few more years

UEFA's Financial Fairplay regime finally arrived this summer – to be greeted immediately by a 10-year, £400million sponsorship deal at Manchester City which will test its detail and credibility.

City lost an eye-watering £121m last year, following £93m in 2009, as the club funded by Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi climbed to fifth place in the Premier League. The losses for 2010-11, due to be published in October, will almost certainly be even greater, covering a year in which City's squad, featuring galactic wage-collectors such as Yaya Toure and David Silva, qualified for UEFA's Champions League and won the FA Cup at Wembley.

UEFA's rules were introduced to bring some sanity to a European game in which, despite its greatest-ever boom, competition for success between financially unequal clubs has led to more and more of those in the top divisions to record losses. Michel Platini, the UEFA president who said in Monaco in August that he sees "red lights" for football in its troubled relationship with money, often seems to be howling for the simpler times of his own playing career, when few talked about clubs' finances - even though money did still determine who could afford the great players like him.

Financial Fairplay (FFP) has been introduced to address the club losses which can push some into insolvency, leaving angst-ridden fans, a trail of creditors and infamy across a game drowning in money.

Seen from the perspective of Mansour's vast spending, UEFA's required regime is quite tight. Clubs which qualify for either the Champions or Europa Leagues – in 2014, an important detail - must be moving towards breaking even, and any losses, which have to be covered with a permanent cash injection, not loans, from an owner, may not exceed a total of €45m (£40m) over both the 2012 and 2013 financial years. Sanctions are not yet defined. The top clubs have suggested penalties should be financial, but UEFA's general secretary, Gianni Infantino, has made it clear UEFA's credibility depends on it being prepared to exclude clubs.

Sceptics have quickly suggested a potential loophole – that owners could dress up their investment as outsized sponsorship deals – but UEFA anticipated that, incorporating into the rules a requirement that all sponsorship deals must be for demonstrable "fair value". Those wondering what this will mean in practice may find out courtesy of City, whose new deal appeared designed to test "fair value" to its boundaries.

City say the headlines were misguided and claim that the sponsorship from Etihad, the airline ultimately owned, as are all Abu Dhabi state enterprises, by Mansour's ruling Al Nahyan family, is not for £400m over 10 years, nor is it just for naming rights on what was the City of Manchester Stadium. The deal is closer to £300m, some sources suggested, for the stadium, shirt sponsorship and naming of the planned new training campus.

> City have three years to enjoy their Etihad deal before UEFA rules on whether it is "fair value"

Nevertheless, such a huge boost to City's income will be examined by UEFA to determine if it is a genuine, commercial sponsorship deal, not owner-investment by other means and they are currently appointing experts in the art of "fair value" to help judge the clubs' deals.

But however monstrous a club's figures might be in 2012, and however exceeding "fair value" its sponsorship might look, the clubs will only be assessed for the 2014-15 season. That means Manchester City, along with everyone else, can compete this season and next, even win the club game's greatest prize, and then be found in 2014 to have failed to comply with Financial Fairplay. This gives City three years to enjoy their Etihad deal before UEFA rules on whether it is fair value or an Abu Dhabi sweet. WS

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"There are better and more competitive leagues than ours. We have had a major drop in quality"

Juventus midfielder Andrea Pirlo on declining standards in Serie A

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 **The president of the Italian coaches association, Renzo Ulivieri, chained himself to railings inside the Italian federation headquarters in Rome. He was protesting against the federation for allegedly allowing some teams to be coached by ex-players who do not have the relevant qualifications as prescribed by Italian sports law. In Italian football, a licence is needed to coach a professional team.**

2 **Premier League newcomers Swansea City say defender Alan Tate has broken a leg in a "bizarre golfing accident". Tate was a passenger in a golf buggy that lost control during a round on a local course. The 28-year-old was taken to hospital and diagnosed with a broken left leg. Tate is one of only three current Swansea players who have played in all four divisions with the club.**

3 **After her fling with Manchester United footballer Ryan Giggs made the headlines earlier in the year, you would think that former reality TV contestant Imogen Thomas would want to steer clear of football for a while. But on holiday in Las Vegas, the Welsh model had the best holiday reading material money can buy: *World Soccer*'s August issue, the bumper preview edition to the 2011-12 season.**

Photo: Coleman-Rayner

RUSSIA

Eto'o hits the jackpot in Russia's war zone

Samuel Eto'o's move to Russian club Anzhi Makhachkala concluded one of the most extraordinary transfers of modern times. After winning Champions League titles with Barcelona and Internazionale, the Cameroon striker signed for Anzhi, the club located in Russia's troubled Dagestan region and owned by billionaire oligarch Suleyman Kerimov.

Inter reportedly accepted a fee of £23.5million, while Eto'o is said to be paid a weekly wage of £350,000 – which, with a signing-on fee and annual bonus could earn him as much as £30m a year. With a tax rate of 11 per cent, the deal makes him the world's highest-salaried footballer.

As reported in last month's *World Soccer*, Dagestan has been troubled by a guerilla war involving Islamic insurgents and Anzhi base their players in Moscow, only flying into the region, which borders Chechnya, on match days.

Eto'o admits his motives for signing what will probably be his last major contract were financial, explaining: "Of course, if it was with the same contract as at Inter, I would not have signed."

He has also claimed that he wants to raise the profile of African football, adding: "I want to prove to Africans that they can become important people. This contract demonstrates to kids that anything is possible."

The move to Russia marked the conclusion of a saga that lasted most of the summer. "In June, just before Cameroon's game against Senegal, Benoit Angbwa, my Cameroon [and now Anzhi] team-mate told me that the owner wanted to talk to me," says Eto'o.

"I met him in Paris afterwards. I went to see [Inter] president [Massimo] Moratti to discuss this opportunity. Afterwards, everything was about the details. It took time. Then, after the Final of the Italian Super Cup, everything was sorted."

Eto'o says he is not worried about the playing conditions in Russia's winter, continuing: "I have played football with temperatures below zero on many occasions, so I am well prepared for Russia's cold weather."

Racism, though, could be more of a problem, given the experiences of his new team-mate Roberto Carlos, who had bananas thrown at him and was subjected to monkey chants when Anzhi played Krylya Sovetov.

Highly rewarded...Eto'o

"It could happen in France, Italy or Spain," Eto'o says. "Players face racial abuse in many countries, but every time I step onto the pitch I try to do the best for those who love football."

Eto'o, now 30, will not play at the 2012 Nations Cup in January because Cameroon failed to qualify. It remains to be seen whether he will be seen in mainstream European football again.

"I think by choosing to play in Russia, Eto'o is signing the death warrant of his football career," said former Cameroon goalkeeper Joseph-Antoine Bell.

John Holmesdale

"Corruption is everywhere"

Refik Halili, the chairman of Albanian side KF Tirana, bemoans the lack of transparency in the game

ITALY

Inter apologise for Forlan mix-up

Diego Forlan made a surprise move from Atletico Madrid to Internazionale at the end of the summer transfer window – but the Italian club did not realise that the Uruguay striker had played for Atletico in the Europa League qualifiers and was therefore not eligible to play for Inter in the Champions League.

Inter signed the 32-year-old Forlan on a two-year deal as a replacement for the Russia-bound Samuel Eto'o. The fee was undisclosed but is believed to be considerably lower than the £20million they received from Anzhi Makhachkala for the Cameroon forward.

However, after the club submitted a 25-man squad containing Forlan's name to UEFA ahead of their Champions League campaign, they were informed by the European governing body that he would have to be scratched from the list.

Ineligible...Forlan

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Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

You can copy great teams, but you can't copy great players

What to make of Michel Platini's remarks about the Barcelona style of play? His advice was "don't try to copy it, that's too difficult" but went on to say Barcelona can be "surpassed" by other teams developing "different styles".

That, presumably, is a recipe for beating Barcelona. But it is deeply flawed.

There is no need to theorise as we've already seen Jose Mourinho's "different style" in action: basically, defensive and spiced up with physical intimidation and sideline histrionics. This, mind you, from Real Madrid, a team containing some of the finest attacking players in the world.

Once you make beating a supposedly superior opponent the central theme, the response will always be destructive; which is why the idea of copying their style is a much better one. More teams playing like Barcelona must be a good thing. The problem is – and Platini obviously knows this – it doesn't work.

Hungary in the 1950s really did seem to have invented a new way of playing. A team unbeaten in four years and a joy to watch – who wouldn't want to play like that? But it all ended in tears as West Germany beat the Hungarians in the 1954 World Cup Final and the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 broke up the "Magical Magyar" team.

In the 1970s everyone wanted to copy Holland. Again it was Germany who ruined things, as they learned some crucial lessons from the Dutch and then beat them in the 1974 World Cup Final. By now a new factor had entered the picture: youth development. The focus was on the youth teams at Ajax, which were duly studied and copied without anyone – including Ajax themselves – being able to produce another group of players like the one that had been so influential in the growth of "total football".

This suggests that the real secret, if such there was one, resided in the players, in that particular group playing in that way at that time. Up until the 1960s, maybe that rather innocent-sounding explanation would have been accepted with a smile and a shrug. But not in the 1970s. By that time the coaching industry was well under way. A tsunami of courses and badges and diplomas and clinics and films and books was in full flow as coaches worked to establish what they did as a science; a science that concentrated, as sciences must, on measurable items such as fitness, size, endurance and statistics, and things that could be reduced to charts and diagrams – like tactics. Not much room there then for players and their bothersome individual skills.

And so to the era of modern era, where tactics and physical size and strength rule. The marvellous thing about Barcelona is that, by their play, they have given the lie to that approach. Their three key players are midgets, while their tactics seem much less important than the ability of their players to control the ball instantly and to pass with accuracy.

> Ajax's youth teams were studied and copied without anyone being able to produce a group of players like the ones so influential in the growth of "total football"

Platini is right that it is not so easy to copy. You need the players, not the tactics. But the scientific coaches tell us that the key to Barca's success is not what they do when they have the ball but how they all work so hard to get it back when they lose it. That's all, there's the secret; there's something that can be taught in training, something that can be copied.

It won't, however, give birth to the new Barcelona. Producing a new Xavi or Iniesta or Messi might do the trick, but that is difficult – not least because it is a long-term approach. But it is surely the only worthwhile approach. That is what makes Platini's negative "don't try to copy" approach so worrying. Copy yes – but start by studying the essence of all the great teams: the players. WS

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"Mourinho is destroying Spanish football"

Barcelona's Gerard Pique accuses the Real Madrid coach after the Spanish Super Cup brawl

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

EUROPE

Assistant **BRANKO BRNOVIC** replaced Zlatko Kranjcar as Montenegro's national coach following their 2-1 defeat by Wales in the Euro qualifiers.

Former Feyenoord coach **MARIO BEEN** has replaced **FRANKY VERCAUTEREN**, who joined Al Jazira in the UAE, as boss of reigning Belgian champions Genk.

SOUTH AMERICA

RICARDO LA VOLPE, who quit as Costa Rica coach, returned to Banfield – the Argentinian club where he began his playing career in the 1970s – to succeed Sebastian Mendez.

Former international midfielder **LEONEL ALVAREZ** was appointed successor to Hernan Dario Gomez as coach of Colombia. Alvarez, who was assistant coach at the Copa America, had taken temporary charge after Gomez resigned in August.

Veteran coach **GREGORIO PEREZ** has taken charge of Penarol for a fifth time. He led the club to four Uruguayan championships between 1993 and 1997.

Full time...Alvarez

RAMON DIAZ, who quit as San Lorenzo coach during the clausura, has replaced Antonio Mohamed at Independiente six games into the Argentinian apertura campaign.

CONCACAF

Colombian coach **JORGE LUIS PINTO** returned to take charge of Costa Rica, who he led during the 2006 World Cup qualifying campaign.

AFRICA

French coach **CLAUDE LE ROY**, who previously coached the DR Congo national side from 2004 to 2006, has taken charge once again.

Frenchman **JEAN-GUY WALLEMME** was appointed coach of Congo. His first match in charge ended in a 1-0 defeat at home to Sudan.

SALIF CAMARA is the new Guinea Football Federation (Feguifoot) president. Previously interim president from 2000 to 2001, he was later accused of selling local players to foreign clubs without abiding by Feguifoot procedures and jailed for two years, prompting FIFA to suspend Guinea from all competitions for two years.

EUROPE Mata heads deadline-day deals

New Blue...Mata

Among the big transfer deadline moves, Spain midfielder **JUAN MATA** joined Chelsea from Valencia for £27million, while Portuguese midfielder **RAUL MEIRELES** made a late switch from Liverpool in a £12.5m deal.

Manchester City signed France midfielder **SAMIR NASRI** from Arsenal for £24m and also agreed to take on former England midfielder **OWEN HARGREAVES**, who was out of contract after leaving Manchester United in June.

Arsenal made a clutch of deadline days signings. Germany defender **PER MERTESACKER** joined from Werder Bremen, Spanish midfielder **MIKAEL ARTETA** arrived from Everton, midfielder **YOSSI BENAYOUN** agreed a season-long loan from Chelsea, Brazilian full-back **ANDRE SANTOS** was signed from Fenerbahce and South Korea forward **PARK CHU-YOUNG** joined from Monaco.

England midfielder **SCOTT PARKER** moved from West Ham United to Tottenham Hotspur, who also signed **EMMANUEL ADEBAYOR** on loan from Manchester City. Spurs also sold **PETER CROUCH** and **WILSON PALACIOS** to Stoke City for fees totalling £20m, while **ALAN HUTTON** and **JERMAINE JENAS** joined Aston Villa.

Wales striker **CRAIG BELLAMY** re-joined Liverpool on loan from Manchester City. Liverpool also signed 20-year-old Uruguay defender **SEBASTIAN COATES** from Nacional.

Fulham signed Costa Rica forward **BRYAN RUIZ** from Twente for a fee of around £10.5m. QPR signed **JOEY BARTON** and **SHAUN WRIGHT-PHILLIPS** on loan from Newcastle United and Manchester City respectively.

JOE COLE joined French champions Lille on a season-long loan from Liverpool while Uruguay defender **DIEGO LUGANO** joined PSG from Fenerbahce.

Roma were the busiest Serie A club in the final days of the transfer window, signing Argentina striker **PABLO OSVALDO** from Espanyol for £15.9m, as well as Bosnian midfielder **MIRALEM PJANIC** from Lyon, Danish defender **SIMON KJAER** from Wolfsburg, **FERNANDO GAGO** from Real Madrid and **FABIO BORINI** from Parma.

Dutch winger **ELJARO ELIA** joined Juventus from Hamburg, while **MAURO ZARATE** joined Internazionale on a season-long loan from Lazio. Inter loaned out striker **GORAN PANDEV** to Napoli, while Milan signed **ANTONIO NOCERINO** from Palermo.

Brazilian midfielder **DIEGO** moved from Wolfsburg to Atletico Madrid, where he will team up with **FALCAO**, who was signed from Porto for a club record £38m.

Record buy...Falcao

For a comprehensive list of transfers go to www.worldsoccer.com/features/summer-transfers-4

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"With all the stones being thrown against me you could build a monument"

Jose Mourinho responds to the criticism

Transfers, sackings and loans

ASIA

Brazil's 1994 World Cup-winning captain **DUNGA**, who has been out of work since being sacked as his country's national coach after last year's tournament in South Africa, has taken charge of Qatari side Al Rayyan.

Former France and Juventus striker **DAVID TREZEGUET** joined UAE club Bani Yas on a free transfer after leaving Spanish club Hercules at the end of last season.

Home... Emerton

Australia international **HARRY KEWELL** will play in the A-League for the first time in his career after joining A-League club Melbourne Victory from Galatasaray. **BRETT EMERTON** left Blackburn Rovers to join Sydney ahead of the new season, and the pair meet in the opening game of the campaign on October 8.

Former Arsenal and Sweden midfielder **FREDDIE LJUNGBERG** has joined J. League side Shimizu S-Pulse.

ABDULLA MESFER, who had a brief spell coaching the national team in 2000, was appointed coach of the UAE.

Australia captain **LUCAS NEILL** left Galatasaray of Turkey to join UAE's Al Jazira.

Carvalho walks out on Portugal

Real Madrid defender **RICARDO CARVALHO** walked out of Portugal's training camp before their World Cup qualifier against Cyprus and announced his retirement from international football.

"I didn't intend to end my journey like this," said the 33-year-old, who also complained of a "lack of respect" and said his "dignity had been hurt".

Quit...Carvalho

EUROPE

Palermo sacked coach **STEFANO PIOLI** just three months after his arrival from Chievo, with club president Maurizio Zamparini claiming: "I saw that the team was no longer following the coach, so I had to intervene and sack him. There was no confidence in him and I was worried that we would be heading in the wrong direction."

Pioli follows Roberto Donadoni, sacked by Cagliari, in leaving his post before the Serie A season got under way.

Fall out...Pioli (left) and Zamparini

DIETMAR CONSTANTINI will step down as coach of Austria at the end of the year after failing to qualify for Euro 2012. Constantini, who took over from Karel Bruckner halfway through World Cup qualification in 2009, has won just seven of his 23 matches.

SOUTH AMERICA

Independiente coach **ANTONIO MOHAMED** quit following the 1-0 defeat by Boca Juniors. He blamed the club's hooligan followers for his decision, saying: "The board pays the barra brava. They are so deep in that the directors cannot stop them, so they do what they think they have to.

"They stayed [in the stadium] a full hour afterwards to show that they are the ones in charge. The moment comes in which you cannot control them any more.

"If this had not happened I would still be in Independiente."

Cruzeiro sacked former South Africa coach **JOEL SANTANA** after a 4-2 defeat by Figueirense. The Brazilian joined the club in June.

Having led Penarol to the Final of the Libertadores Cup in June, **DIEGO AGUIRRE** quit the Uruguayan club to take charge of Al Rayyan of the Qatari premier division.

CONCACAF

Argentinian coach **DIEGO COCCA** was fired by Mexican side Santos Laguna after three straight defeats, culminating in a 3-2 loss at Jaguares.

AFRICA

Ghanaian **SELLAS TETTEH** resigned as coach of Rwanda following the 5-0 defeat by the Ivory Coast in their African Nations Cup group. Having signed a two-year deal in February 2010, his side won only one of their five qualifiers for next year's finals.

ROBERT NOUZARET has retired after quitting as coach of the Democratic Republic of Congo. The Frenchman had spells with Lyon, Saint-Etienne and Montpellier as well as three African nations.

ASIA

SRECKO KATANEC, who was in charge of his homeland Slovenia at the 2002 World Cup finals, was sacked as United Arab Emirates coach after World Cup qualifying defeats by Kuwait and Lebanon.

BAICHUNG BHUTIA, who became the first Indian to play professionally in Europe, has retired from international football, having won 110 caps and scored 43 goals in a 16-year career with the national side.

Syria coach **NIZAR MAHROUS** resigned after his side were disqualified from the 2014 FIFA World Cup for playing an ineligible player against Tajikistan in the second round.

Retired...Bhutia

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Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Europe united... Rummenigge (right) and Platini

Rummenigge, our best bet to clean up FIFA

Hercules cleaned out the filthy, muck-ridden Augean Stables. Now Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, once among the world's best forwards and currently the chief executive and chairman of the European Club Association, insists he will clean up FIFA. A truly laudable ambition, but how, pray, does he propose to do it?

If Rummenigge was a leading player for West Germany, then his greatest compatriot, Franz Beckenbauer, and France's Michel Platini, now top man at UEFA, seem to be in Sepp Blatter's squalid corner. After the withdrawal of Mohamed Bin Hammam, who still protests his flawless innocence in the face of such damning dollar evidence, Beckenbauer announced that he was pleased that all had been settled.

As for Platini, though there is no evidence that he is not as pure as the driven snow, he astonishingly backed Qatar in their ludicrous but successful bid for the 2022 World Cup and has latterly, despite UEFA's attempts to impress financial fair play on its clubs, spoken in favour of Qatar's recent takeover of Paris Saint-Germain, declaring that they and their unlimited riches will be good for the French game.

A bleak light was recently cast on the realities of FIFA in an interview with long-standing top executive Michel D'Hooghe, who was accused of receiving, keeping and not declaring a Russian painting from an old Russian executive friend. It was valueless, he insists, and perhaps indeed it was. It was hardly a criminal offence.

More depressingly significant, surely, was the way the Belgian spoke about FIFA and Blatter, reminding one yet again of the dictum of the great political philosopher Edmund Burke that "for evil to triumph, it is enough for good men to do nothing".

According to D'Hooghe: "Sepp is more the guy who tries to be in the middle of the problems." I suppose there are two different ways you could read this statement, the negative one being that Blatter is, indeed, in "the middle of the problems" not least because he has created so many of them himself.

D'Hooghe denied that Blatter had influenced the eventual decision against England's doomed two-vote World Cup bid. Well, there is no doubt that Blatter, shortly before the vote, criticised the English behaviour but, since everything was done and dusted by then, his words were merely said in passing.

Blatter, says D'Hooghe, "has to present definite changes, certainly go for complete transparency, stricter control of everything. He will do it".

And pigs might fly.

> Blatter is indeed, "in the middle of the problems", not least because he has created so many of them himself

Events conspire against Wenger

Poor Arsene Wenger must have been feeling like Shakespeare's Hamlet in recent weeks: "How all occasions do inform against me."

You could hardly blame him for the hugely expensive loss through injury of both Jack Wilshere, uniquely indispensable both to Arsenal and England as a playmaker, and Thomas Vermaelen, the bulwark of the defence.

That 8-2 defeat at Old Trafford – where Wenger was obliged through injury and suspensions to put out a team of threads and patches – was, it had been widely reported, the worst the Gunners had suffered since Loughborough Town beat Woolwich Arsenal 8-0, in the old Second Division, on December 12, 1896.

What went unmentioned, poetic justice if you like, was that on March 12, 1900, the Gunners thrashed Loughborough 12-0, which remains the largest victory they have ever recorded. Someone called Gaudie

The writing was on the wall...the words in the Manchester City dressing room came back to haunt former CEO Cook (right)

scored three times. No, alas, I don't know who he was.

Of the various players Wenger bought in such haste, Yossi Benayoun may turn out to be the best bet, though he, like Per Mertesacker and Mikel Arteta, have been subject to injury.

Arteta cost the Gunners a cool £10million from Everton. Those who follow the Blues closely tell me he has never been the same player since his injuries and, though technically accomplished, he has neither the dynamism of Arsenal's departed Cesc Fabregas nor the constructive wiles of Wilshere.

However, Gervinho, with his skills, pace and flair, does look a true acquisition.

Man City, a blight on the English game

With all those riches from Abu Dhabi, Manchester City have now distorted the Premier League even more than Chelsea did. Having spent yet another fortune on Argentina's Sergio Aguero, who is already scoring goals galore, they can happily afford to do without even the revitalised Edin Dzeko, who was absent from the 3-0 win against Wigan Athletic despite his goalscoring feats at Tottenham Hotspur, where even the mighty Carlos Tevez spent the bulk of the game on the bench.

Eulogised in various sections of the press, I can see Manchester City only as a blight on the English game. And let it be remembered that by buying so much exceptional talent, all of which can hardly be deployed at any one time, City are preventing such players being acquired by rival clubs. Still, at least Garry Cook has gone after allegedly sneering at the cancer-afflicted mother and agent of Nedum Onuoha. No tears shed over the ex-City CEO by me.

I accept that Cook, whose brash and voluble approach to his task was doubtless inculcated during his American years in sports business, may well have done significant things for City. Yet it is hard to forget his nonsensical accusation against Milan of supposedly "bottling it" when they refused to sell Kaka to Cook's club.

> It is hard to forget Cook's nonsensical accusation against Milan of "bottling it" when they refused to sell Kaka to City

Nor was it endearing when he characterised the outrageous Thaksin Shinawatra – waved through as owner of City by the egregious Premier League as a "fit and proper person" despite his record in Thailand of corruption and repression – as a pleasant person with whom to play golf.

Fabio's England mirage

Capello's disappointing England plainly miss Jack Wilshere as badly as do Arsenal, and you can hardly blame the Italian for the fact that there is no other English playmaker in sight. Is there a Glenn Hoddle in the house? Or a Paul Gascoigne? Not to mention, going further back still, a Johnny Haynes?

Capello says he will be happy to clear the decks and bring younger players into his team, but where is he going to find them? He was lucky against Wales at Wembley, above all when Robert Earnshaw missed a sitter and in that Gary Speed, once a left-winger himself, inexplicably kept the flying Gareth Bale on the right wing instead of deploying him against the potentially vulnerable Chris Smalling on the left. Lucky, too, in the absence of Craig Bellamy, who would have been a substantial thorn in the side of this dull England team.

Fortunately for Capello, the steam seems to have gone out of their chief challengers Montenegro, who petulantly, but perhaps predictably, sacked their coach Zlatko Kranjcar after the surprising defeat in Wales.

With Wilshere and Steven Gerrard eventually back in the side all should not be lost. But sacrificing Wayne Rooney up front, where Wales predictably and effectively close marked him, made no tactical sense at all. An ultimate European triumph is a mirage.

Russia's airlines cast a grim shadow over 2018

The fact Russia was so controversially awarded the 2018 World Cup has tended to be obscured by the dirty work at the crossroads which accompanied Qatar's successful bid. There surely seemed good enough reason for Russia to be rejected, given the appalling racism which infects their club football – as West Bromwich Albion's Peter Odemwingie can testify.

Now, however, there is another, graver factor which, in any rationally organised sport, should put Russia's World Cup choice in jeopardy: the abysmal state of their airlines.

The recent disastrous crash of an 18-year-old Yak aircraft, wiping out the leading ice-hockey team Lokomotiv Yaroslavl, caused even the president of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev, to deplore the state of his country's aviation. "We cannot go on like this," he declared. "We need to create modern companies that will cover all of Russia."

And it is over pretty well all of Russia that the World Cup teams will be obliged to fly in 2018.

Needless to say, pilot error, that eternal cover-up, was advanced for the crash of the ancient aircraft, although, allegedly, one of its three engines failed, which prevented it from gaining height. The old joke about the Soviet Union being the Upper Volta with rockets, seems horribly apposite, again. The word is of obsolescent, badly maintained aircraft, feeble controls, poor pilot

Poignant vigil... President Medvedev pays his respects at the scene of Russia's latest air disaster

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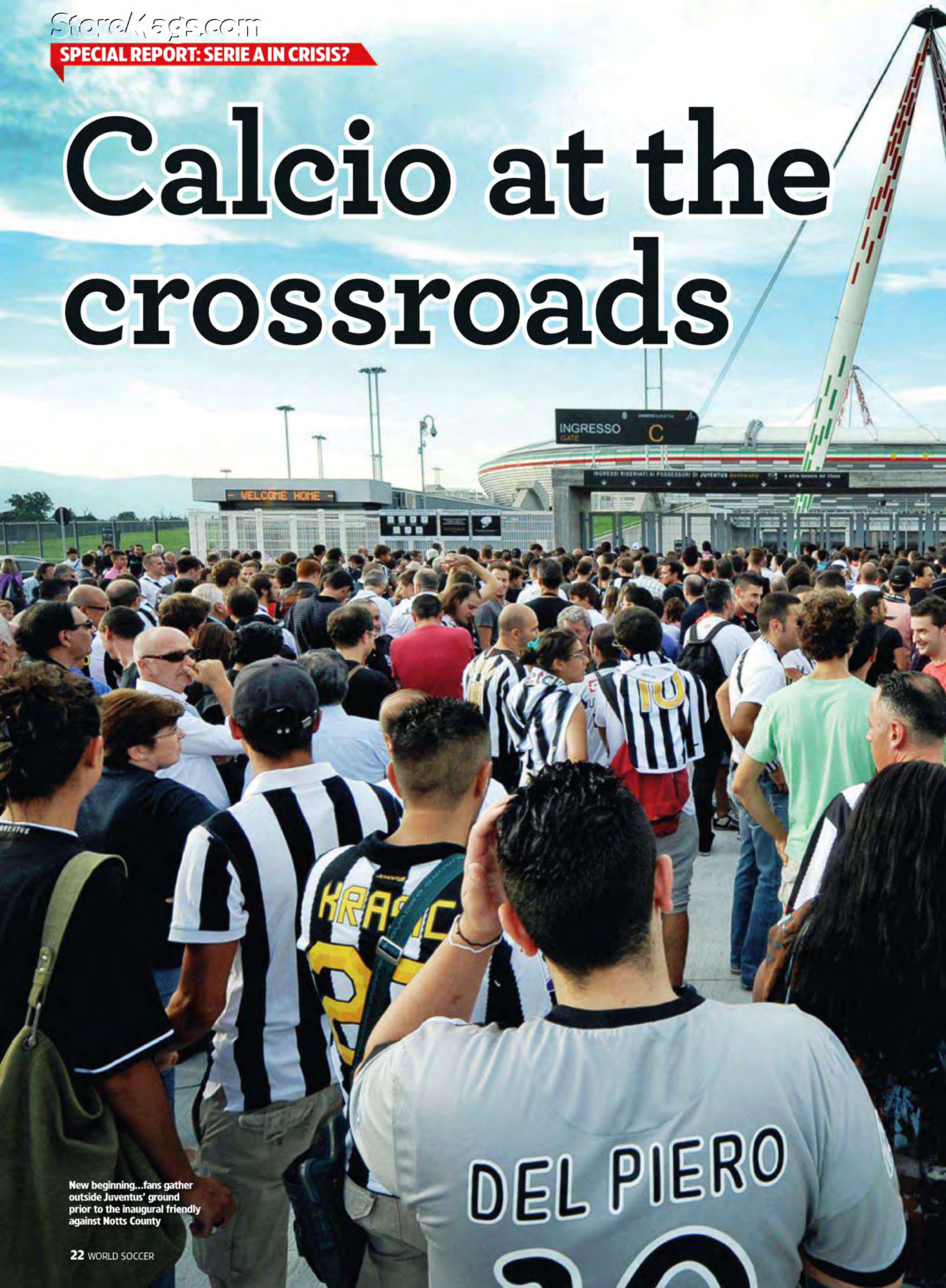
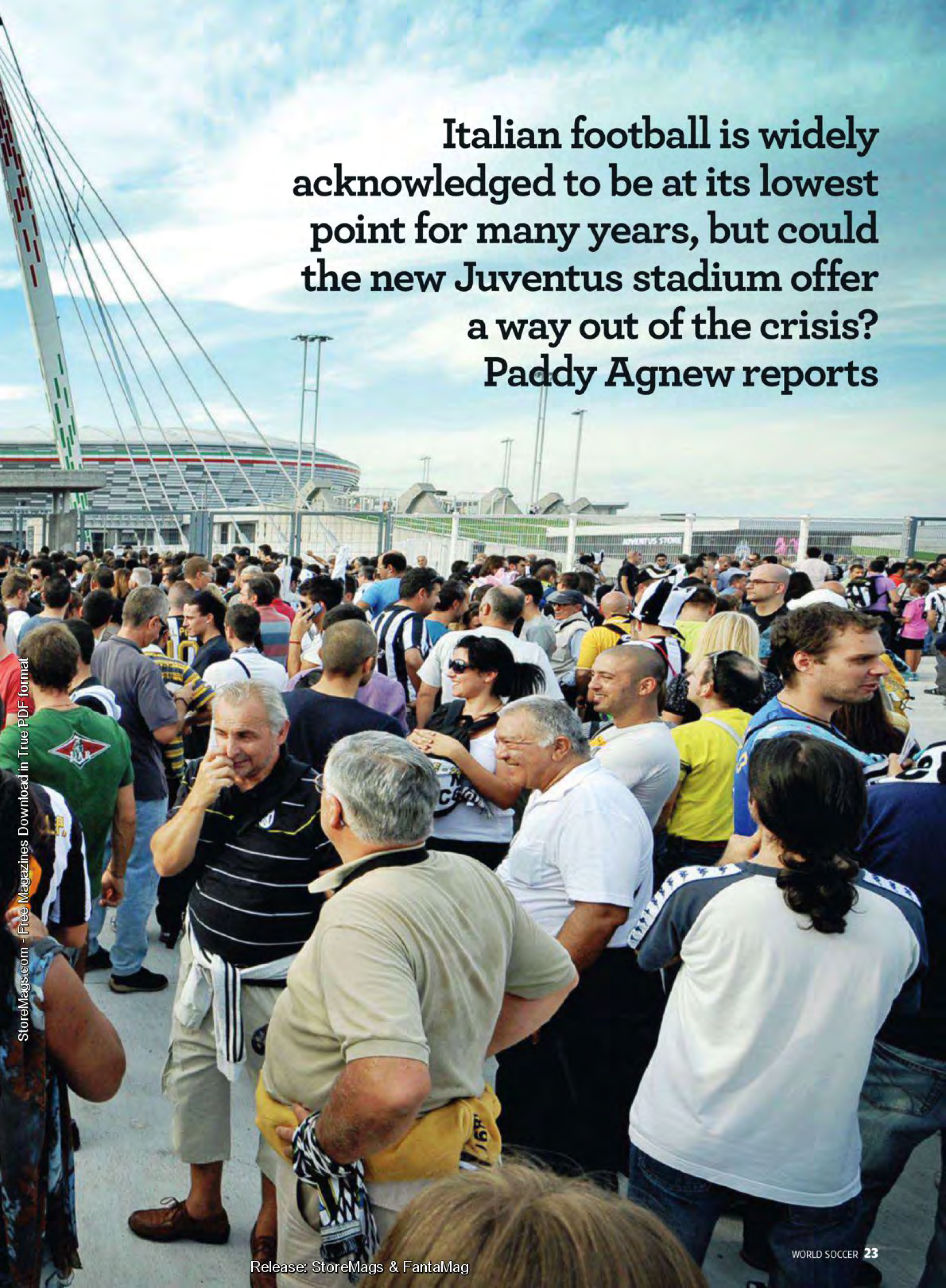
Calcio at the crossroads



New beginning...fans gather outside Juventus' ground prior to the inaugural friendly against Notts County



Italian football is widely acknowledged to be at its lowest point for many years, but could the new Juventus stadium offer a way out of the crisis? Paddy Agnew reports

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We did not really need Alex Ferguson to tell us, but it was comforting all the same. At the end of another polemical Italian summer, marked by the "Last Bet" betting scandal and a player strike that delayed the start of the new Serie A season, Manchester United's manager offered a few sage observations on Italian football.

Speaking in early September at the Rome university of Tor Vergata, where he was presented with an "Ethics in Sport" award, Ferguson reminded Italian fans that all is not lost.

"The history of football goes in cycles," he said. "In the 1970s, you had Ajax and Bayern, then there was Liverpool, and then Arrigo Sacchi's Milan and Marcello Lippi's Juventus had a great period for Italian football. At the end of the 1990s, Spanish teams emerged and now, in the last six or seven years, the power of TV money has seen the best players in the world come to England. In Italy, you've just got to be patient and you'll start winning again."

Ferguson also had some very precise and pertinent advice for Italy, adding: "You've got to change the stadiums; they're simply not suitable for making the most of football. I'm thinking of grounds like the Olympic Stadium in Rome. It's a lovely stadium, but with that running track around the pitch it's difficult to create the right sort of atmosphere for a game."

Needless to say, when asked which stadium represented his ideal ground, Ferguson replied "Old Trafford". He did, however, also point to Borussia Dortmund's celebrated Westfalenstadion as a good example of a football ground.

The point about all of this is that Ferguson was speaking just one week before Juventus, proudly unveiled their new stadium, constructed on the site of the old, 1989-built Stadio Delle Alpi. In a spectacular and moving ceremony – featuring many great club figures of the past such as the Agnelli brothers, Gianni and Umberto – the club also recalled poignant moments such as the 1985 Heysel disaster.

The inauguration, however, was about more than the past; it was very clearly targeted at a brighter future, one in which the brand new 41,000 all-seater stadium will always be full, thus guaranteeing greater revenues for the club. Built along Premier League lines, the £100million stadium comes without fan barriers even though the front row of spectators is just a few feet away from the pitch.

Featuring the now customary VIP boxes, commercial centre and restaurants, the new stadium may well be pointing the way forward to a braver, brighter and more remunerative future, not just for Juve themselves, but for the entire Italian football movement. For example, Juventus expect their jewel to

> "[Italian stadiums] are simply not suitable for making the most of football" Alex Ferguson

Impressive...the new Juventus Stadium

earn them not only 20 per cent more at the box office, but also six or seven points more on the field.

Clearly, the Juventus Stadium, which may later change its name when a sponsor is enrolled, will be watched closely, not only from the economic but also from the "cultural" viewpoint. Italian football authorities will be desperately hoping that the barrier-free, amenity-rich stadium will generate a violence-free, family atmosphere in total contrast to those many moments of stadium violence and racism that have so besmirched the image of Italian football in the last decade.

Alarm bell

Milan managing director, Adriano Galliani has already sounded a loud alarm bell about the overall state of Italian football, pointing out that Serie A has gone from the status of a luxury restaurant to that of a basic "pizzeria". In a sense, he was only confirming the findings of Deloitte's *Annual Review Of Football Finance* which last June confirmed that Serie A is now

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Calcio's 20-year decline

FROM THIS... TO THIS...

Italia 90

The 1990 World Cup on home soil showcased a new-look Italian game to the rest of the watching world.

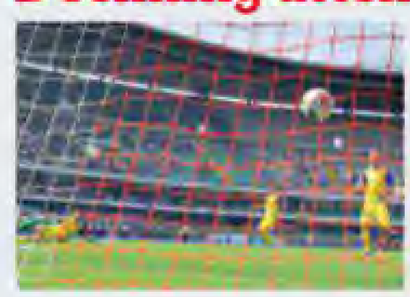
Euro 2012

UEFA chose east Europe to host the finals rather than put their faith in the rebuilding of Italian stadiums.

Packed stadiums

With the rebuilding and refurbishing of several arenas for the 1990 World Cup, many Italian clubs were able to move into new and state-of-the-art stadiums in which they would now enjoy record league attendances.

Declining attendances



Serie A crowds averaged 24,306 last season, compared to a high of 34,204 in 1992.

World stars

Foreign talent – from Gullit and Van Basten, to Matthaus and Maradona, earned big wages in Serie A.

Summer 2011 transfers

Stars who would have joined leading Serie A clubs in the past opted to move elsewhere. Sergio Aguero rejected Juventus for Manchester City, while Javier Pastore left Palermo for Paris Saint-Germain and Samuel Eto'o joined Russia's Anzhi Makhachkala.

Televisual spectacle

Before the launch of the Premier League in England, Serie A was the world's most-watched league on TV. *Channel 4* enjoyed healthy viewing figures for its Sunday afternoon *Football Italia* coverage for much of the 1990s.

TV turn-off

The match-fixing scandal and other problems – such as hooliganism, racism and the recent threatened player strike – have contributed to falling TV viewing figures. *Channel 4* dropped its coverage of Italian football in 2002. *Five* later took on the contract but stopped in 2008.

Euro success

Milan reached five European Cup Finals, winning three of them. Italian clubs won the UEFA Cup six times in seven years.

Euro woes

Roma, Palermo and Udinese all lost in this season's European qualifying rounds, while Inter were beaten at home by Trabzonspor in the Champions League.

only the fourth-biggest league in the world, its annual revenue of €1.5billion outstripped by the Premier League (€2.5bn), the Bundesliga (€1.7bn) and La Liga (€1.6bn).

Put another way, a club like Milan generate less than 50 per cent of Real Madrid's annual turnover. What is worrying about that observation is Milan are arguably the most advanced and developed Serie A club when it comes to sponsorships and commercial dealings.

Nor did a player strike on the opening day of the new Serie A season do much for the image of Italian football. At stake in what looked very much like a power struggle between players and club owners was the status of players: are they self-employed or staff? Even more important than this, however, was the players' rejection of the "constructive dismissal" practice employed by many clubs which effectively "sidelines" a player who refuses either to sign a new contract or accept a transfer by forcing him to train

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Tough times...Berlusconi (left) and European Council president Herman Van Rompuy

with the reserves. For the time being, this thorny problem has not so much been resolved as put on hold in the expectation that the parties will arrive at a full agreement in the coming months.

In reality, though, Italian football is simply mirroring the society in which it is played. For much of this summer, Italy's chronic economic problems have appeared to threaten the very stability of the euro. Worries about the traditional negative factors in the Italian economy – zero growth, a 120 per cent debt to GDP ratio, 27 per cent youth unemployment and the influence of organised crime – have been heightened by the Berlusconi government's inability or unwillingness to enact the sort of cost-cutting and revenue-increasing measures seen as necessary by both the European Central Bank and the European Commission. In the end, the government has had to hurriedly enact emergency "austerity" budgets.

As far as football is concerned, there is clearly no magic wand. However, many commentators argue that without a greater investment in youth teams, without a reduction in the numbers of professional (or semi-professional) teams, without some form of pay cap (the Serie A wage bill is currently €1.1bn), without greater marketing opportunities and, above all, without investment in club-owned stadiums, then Italian football is destined to trail behind its European peer group.

For all of those reasons, the significance of the Juventus Stadium is obvious. For a start, Juve are the first top-flight Italian club to own their ground (lower-division side Reggiana are the only other team in modern times to own their ground). It says much about Italy's most famous and prestigious club that it was able to conclude its stadium project in less than three years, at a time of global economic crisis and at a moment when a bill which might release state funds for new stadiums remains obstinately stuck in its parliamentary iter.

As Ferguson said, all is not lost. WS

Calciopoli's shadow hangs over the Italian game

As the new Serie A season belatedly kicked off in mid-September, it was hard to keep Juventus off the front page. Not only did they break new ground by becoming the first current Serie A side to inaugurate their own stadium, but they also indicated that happy days may be on the way back with an impressive 4-1 demolition of Parma on the opening day.

On top of that, Juve set much ink flowing with their controversial decision to appeal to UEFA in order to have Internazionale thrown out of the Champions League. Juventus argue that Inter are in breach of article 2.05 of the Champions League competition rules in that they were involved in alleged match fixing in the pre-Calciopoli years.

This remarkable allegation comes as no surprise. Juventus have long argued that more recent wiretaps relating to the 2006 Calciopoli match-fixing scandal prove that the then Inter president, the late Giacinto Facchetti, was also involved in match-fixing activities. Inter have always denied this accusation, saying that the contacts between Facchetti and referee nominator Paolo Bergamo were harmless.

These more recent wiretaps came up in the context of Calciopoli 2, the still-ongoing, state judicial investigation based in Naples, in which state prosecutors have called for a five-year-eight-month sentence to be handed down to former Juventus director Luciano Moggi, who is now banned from football for life.

The problem for Inter is that when called to rule on this more recent wiretap evidence, the football federation's senior prosecutor, Stefano Palazzi, concluded that Inter had indeed been guilty of "an illicit act" in 2006 in that they had tried to "gain an advantage for themselves...by conditioning the correct functioning of referees". Palazzi, however, ruled that no sanctions could be applied to Inter since the Statute of Limitations applied – in other words, too much time has passed since the alleged offence.

However, in an interview in September with *Gazzetta Dello Sport*, Naples state prosecutor Giuseppe Narducci appeared to clear Inter's name, telling the sports daily: "People talk of Facchetti's phone calls as if there was a direct analogy with what we saw with Moggi and his associates on trial. People tried to insinuate that everybody was doing the same thing and that therefore no one was guilty. That's simply not true."

Before Narducci had issued that clarification, Juventus had already taken the case to UEFA saying that the real target of their action was not Inter but rather the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) which, in the never-to-be-forgotten summer of 2006, stripped them of that year's league title, as part punishment for their involvement in Calciopoli.

Juventus want that 2006 title back and, lest anyone fail to get the point, the club pointedly underlined that it had won a total of 29 league titles during the celebrations that marked the opening of their new stadium. If you look at the record books, they say that Juventus have only won 27 titles, given that they were stripped of both their 2005 and 2006 scudetti as a result of the Federation's Calciopoli investigation.

We have not heard the last of this one yet...

Seeking justice...Juventus fans demonstrate outside the court in Naples

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NICK BIDWELL
in Munich

National team bank on feel-good factor

Confidence is high after the national team became the first to qualify for Euro 2012

Ever since Germany secured their qualification for Euro 2012 with eight wins out of eight in their group – thus becoming the first team to book their ticket for Poland and Ukraine – it has been almost impossible to find someone in the country not utterly confident that the *Nationalmannschaft* will sweep all before them in next year's finals.

Sorry Spain. No way Holland. Apologies England, Italy, France and Portugal. The consensus of opinion in Germany is that the current team are bang on course for their first international title since they triumphed at Euro 96. And even though such rock-solid belief can and will irritate those of a non-Deutschland persuasion, the cold fact is that the euphoria is perfectly justified.

The nation's footballing feel-good factor is more based on style than substance. Fans and pundits might be impressed by Germany's 100 per cent record in their games against Turkey, Belgium, Austria, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, and their outstanding goal difference of 28 for to five against, but what has really turned on the fans in these parts is the team's free-flowing, attacking play and their obvious lust for the spectacular.

Once upon a time, a German national team would see the qualification process for a major tournament as a pure exercise in pragmatism. Collect the points required anyway, anyhow, and then start preparing for the greater challenges ahead. But not the current group who, contrary to the economic austerity in vogue across the world at the moment, never go in for short measures or low gears and are always looking to attack at full throttle.

Curb the enthusiasm and voracious appetite of attacking-third stars such as Thomas Muller, Mesut Ozil and Lukas Podolski? You would probably have more chance getting Bundestag legislators to opt for prohibition.

As they proved so conclusively in the 6-2 hammering of a totally embarrassed Austria in Gelsenkirchen, this is a Germany team determined not to keep possession for possession's sake. Slick and quick in their combination play, and boasting the added value of playmaker Ozil, they are a team who never sleep, in standby mode from first minute to last.

And they believe, too. Team manager Oliver Bierhoff and several key players are openly backing themselves to be the next European champions, while veteran Miroslav Klose, for 10 years at the point of the *Nationalmannschaft* attack, describes the present side as "the best German team I've ever played in". Usually so reticent in matters of hyperbole or self-promotion, Klose's words speak volumes.

Look closely at the German class of 2011-12 and the first thing to grab the senses is the evident enjoyment the squad derive from operating in the same go-getting ensemble. It says much for coach Joachim Low's ability that today's *Nationalmannschaft* have the distinct feel and organisation of a club side and it is for this very reason that someone like Podolski, so often anaemic at club level, never fails to deliver on national service.

Centre of attention...Ozil in the thick of the action against Austria

Another factor in Germany's favour is their strength in depth. Four or five years ago their bench was of the workmanlike variety, willing but essentially limited. But now, with ripening young talent seeming to hang from every branch – the result of a massive shake-up in youth development structures and methods a decade ago – it is a completely different story. Farewell Trochowski, Beck, Hitzlsperger, Westermann and Jansen. Hello Dortmund quartet Mats Hummels, Marcel Schmelzer, Sven Bender and Mario Gotze, Schalke's Benedikt Howedes, Andre Schurrle at Bayer Leverkusen and Marco Reus of Gladbach. Ozil or Gotze as the No10? Now that's being spoilt for choice.

When it comes to instinctively

EURO 2012: THE NEW BOYS

MATS HUMMELS
With Arsenal's Per Mertesacker beginning to display one or two signs of decline, the 22-year-old Dortmund centre-back looks a more than credible replacement. He's also quicker and better on the ball too.

MARIO GOTZE
The Dortmund boy-wonder playmaker marked his first start for Germany with a goal in the August friendly victory over Brazil. Does not look out of place for his country and is the same box of tricks as at club level.

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> "This has to be the best German team I have ever played in"
>
> **Mirolsav Klose**

knowing just the right moment to jettison the old guard and integrate fresh faces, Low has proved himself one of the best in the business. Don't be fooled by the *Bundestrainer*'s genial exterior. Below the surface he is an absolutely ruthless team builder, never swayed by reputation or hype – hence his decision to cut the patently fading Michael Ballack from his plans this summer.

A priority for Low will be to keep everyone's feet on the ground. Teams who are omnipotent in qualifying are rarely able to sustain that sort of momentum in the finals themselves and there is every chance that Germany could end up in a "group of death" as they are likely to be among the second seeds and could easily constitute a devil's own foursome alongside Spain, Portugal and France.

Even the most casual observer has to be aware that the weakest link in this particular German chain is at the back. There is a school of thought which says long-serving centre-back Per Mertesacker – who recently quit Werder Bremen for Arsenal – is no longer worth his place, while Jerome Boateng, now back in Germany at Bayern Munich following a so-so season with Manchester City, continues to struggle somewhat, especially with distribution.

Lahm's furore

One issue Low could have done without was the furore prompted by his skipper, Philipp Lahm, who seemed anxious to offend as many important football people as he possibly could in his newly published autobiography.

So much for Lahm's image as the boy next door. In *Das feine Unterscheid* (the subtle difference), the full-back lined up almost all his former coaches at Bayern for a back-alley mugging. Jurgen Klinsmann was described as only good for fitness training, Felix Magath found himself lambasted for ruling by fear, while Louis Van Gaal was depicted as incurably stubborn and whose inflexibility led to his downfall earlier this year.

Lahm's attempt at serial character assassination inevitably prompted calls for his resignation as captain, and though Low was clearly annoyed by the matter – "there are passages in the book I do not like" – he settled instead for a private, clear-the-air meeting.

"I didn't want to offend Jurgen Klinsmann or anyone else, much less insult them. I am sorry," said Lahm. Too little, too late, retorted ex-*Bundestrainer* Rudi Voller, another of Lahm's targets. "Lahm has no character," said Voller.

The motto of the tale is: if you must put pen to paper, wait until you retire. WS

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SPAIN

SID LOWE
in Madrid

Can *La Roja* make history?

The world and European champions are aiming for a third consecutive title at Euro 2012

All for one...tempers flare between Spain and Chile

Spain may have lost their place at the head of the FIFA world rankings but at least they have secured their place at next summer's European Championship in Poland and the Ukraine. The World and European title-holders will now try to do what no team has ever achieved before and win three international tournaments in a row.

A victory over Chile in Geneva at the start of September finally bucked a trend of dreadful results in friendlies, while a convincing 5-0 victory over Liechtenstein three days later meant that Spain qualified with a record of played six, won six, scored 20 and conceded five. With three games remaining, Scotland and the Czech Republic are out of contention.

They used to complain that Spain were the world champions of friendlies, given their propensity for winning games that didn't matter - and often against the very best nations, too - and then failing to win the ones that did. Now at least the games they are losing are not the real things and qualification has run smoothly. The Spanish would certainly prefer it this way round, and yet, oddly, the Chile friendly was treated as if it had been the more important of the two - not least because it ended up anything but friendly. Beating Liechtenstein had, after all, been a formality.

Led by Andres Iniesta, Spain came back from 2-0 down and a truly awful first half to win 3-2, with Cesc Fabregas scoring twice, against an impressive Chile side. Here, at last, was some character after a series of worryingly insipid friendly performances which had seen Spain defeated by Argentina and Portugal, conceding four goals each time, and performing poorly in Mexico. But it was not so much because of the victory itself, impressive though the second half had been, that Spanish commentators were pleased. It was more because it ended with a fight between the two sides.

That may not sound like the most positive of ways to finish a game, but it was taken in Spain as a very good sign - and a much needed one, too. After all the tension that built up around the *clasicos* between Real Madrid and Barcelona, and the evident bad feeling that had created among international team-mates, after the accusations that Jose Mourinho was "ruining Spanish football" from Gerard Pique, and after coach Vicente Del Bosque had admitted that he was concerned about the effects on the *seleccion*, the fight was considered cathartic. It brought unity at last. Or so they said.

> "The scuffle of reconciliation...the family that fights together stays together...there is no problem, *La Roja* remains alive"
> Sports newspaper *AS* on the friendly v Chile

It had started with Andres Iniesta, who was defended by Alvaro Arbeloa, who in turn was defended by Sergio Busquets, to whose rescue came Sergio Ramos. Madrid and Barcelona players were involved in yet more trouble but this time they were on the same side. After squaring up to each other so often, now they were fighting together. A greater cause had, it seemed, united them. Afterwards, Xavi joked: "See, told you there were no problems."

The cover of sports newspaper *AS* called it "the scuffle of reconciliation", its editorial claiming: "The family that fights together, stays together. They were united by their colours, pride in being world champions and the satisfaction of a comeback against a great team. The conclusion is simple: there is no problem, *La Roja* remains alive."

Marca added: "A shameful scuffle blows away any doubts about the unity of the national team: Madrid and Barcelona players defended each other like brothers."

Now they can defend each other at next summer's Euro Championship. WS

EURO 2012: THE NEW BOYS

ALVARO NEGREDO
Scorer of two goals against Liechtenstein, he now has an impressive five in just seven games (and only four starts) for Spain. Against Liechtenstein he was chosen ahead of Fernando Torres, who watched the game from the stands.

THIAGO ALCANTARA
Another reason to be cheerful after the Liechtenstein game was Thiago's first competitive start now means that there is no question about his international future – he will play for Spain rather than Brazil, as his World-Cup winning father Mazinho did.

KLAAS-JAN DROPPERT
in The Hague

Better than Cruyff, Van Basten and Co?

Debate is raging as to whether this is the best Dutch team ever

Leader...Sneijder scores against San Marino

The best national team ever? Better than the one that brought the world "total football" in the 1970s? Better than the team that collected the country's only international title in 1988? That is the debate that is raging at the moment.

The reason is Holland's smooth and solid qualification for the Euro finals and their promotion, if only for a month, to first place in the FIFA rankings.

But are Sneijder, Robben and Van Persie better than Cruyff or Van Basten and Gullit? It's hard to tell, says national coach Bert Van Marwijk, never a man for overexcitement or bold expressions, "but it is extremely admirable that the players have been able to reach such a high level for nearly three years".

Van Marwijk has facts on his side. In 39 matches under his reign, Holland have lost only twice since August 2008, one of which was the World Cup Final.

But what is striking is that the wins have been combined with dazzling football. Watching the Euro qualifiers, gone was the general World Cup opinion that Holland had lost their frivolous attack-minded football. Over the last year the team delivered some impressive performances. Hungary were swept aside 4-0 at home, closest challengers Sweden didn't stand a chance in a 4-1 mauling in Amsterdam, while minnows San Marino were the perfect opposition for an 11-0 thrashing that was the biggest victory in Holland's history.

Van Marwijk's Euro 2012 preparation began in June when the squad flew around the world for an exhausting South America trip after a long and demanding club season. He felt it was important to face real opposition, such as Brazil and Uruguay, but also wanted to promote team spirit.

Despite taking up time during their holidays, the players were well aware of what was at stake and it's no secret that Van Marwijk was not pleased with Theo Janssen of Ajax and Spartak Moscow's Demy De Zeeuw who cried off with uncertain injuries. PSV midfielder Kevin Strootman, who was playing at second division Sparta Rotterdam just 12 months ago, grabbed his chance as Janssen and De Zeeuw jeopardised their Euro 2012 chances.

The inclusion of Strootman, or Rafael Van der Vaart, who are both more attack-minded than the defensive Nigel De Jong, has added to the sense of pleasure to be had watching this team.

The other crucial factor is the key player Wesley Sneijder, who Marco Van Basten described after the San Marino game as "the best midfielder in Holland's history". The Internazionale player has developed into the undisputed leader of the pack, a real playmaker on the pitch who starts every attack. His precise passes with either foot and quick movement to either flank brings variety to Holland's game. All of this, however, does not mean Holland are unbeatable.

> Marco Van Basten described Wesley Sneijder as "the best midfielder in Holland's history" and he has developed into an undisputed leader

One problem is that the team seems unable to perform at the highest level continuously. For instance, a few days after the Hungary thrashing the same opponents nearly clinched a draw in the return, which finished 5-3. And Finland were only beaten at home by a slender 2-1 margin, with the opposition wasting several chances.

Those games brought back memories of Euro 2008 when Holland outplayed France and Italy during the group phase, but were knocked out when it really mattered.

And what to do with Robin Van Persie? The Arsenal man has proved for club and country that he isn't a real centre-forward, but the coach will never drop him. If Arjen Robben remains fit, Van Persie will have to play centre-forward, but many think that the team is better with a goal poacher like Klaas-Jan Huntelaar leading the line.

Holland have the quality to win their second European championship, 24 years after their first, but then so have Spain and Germany, who just happen to be the Euro title-holders and runners-up respectively.

The only way to put an end to the discussion is by winning silverware. WS

EURO 2012: THE NEW BOYS

LUUK DE JONG
The Twente striker has emerged as a genuine rival to Klaas-Jan Huntelaar as the team's main goal-poacher.

ERIK PIETERS
The PSV Eindhoven wing-back could be the answer to Holland's one weak spot, at left-back.

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MARK GLEESON

Libya's bright new beginning

Qualification for the African Nations Cup is within the troubled nation's grasp

Days after Tripoli fell and Muammar Gaddafi departed, Libya continued their run in the African Nations Cup qualifiers with an emotive win in neighbouring Egypt.

A 1-0 "home" win over Mozambique kept alive Libya's hopes of qualifying for the 2012 finals and proved a massive source of joy in the north African country, where the victory was celebrated almost as feverishly as the departure of the despised dictator.

The game itself was played in front of a handful of spectators as CAF had ordered that it be held behind closed doors for fears of potential crowd violence. It was eventually staged in neutral Cairo, having been switched days before from Mali.

Libya had played their previous home game in the group in the Malian capital of Bamako when the football federation was still under the control of the Gaddafi regime. On that occasion in March, just after the start of the revolution, the players had used the occasion of the game to make overt statements of support in favour of Gaddafi, flying his green flag and swearing their allegiance.

National captain Tarek Tayeb was the most vociferous in pledging his allegiance, using the now all-too-familiar tag of "dogs" and "rats" to describe the rebels. But he was nowhere to be seen in September when Libya played for the first time under their new flag in Cairo.

Libya's league closed down in early March and although there were hopes for a 10-day camp in Morocco ahead of the Mozambique game, the fighting was such that by the time of their intended departure it proved too dangerous for many of the Tripoli-based players to make the trip by road to Tunisia to fly on to Morocco. Libya asked for a postponement but, with no other date available, permission was refused.

With only a week of preparations in Benghazi under assistant coach Abdulhafidh Arbeesh, they travelled to Cairo to be joined by Brazil's Marco Paqueta, who had signed a four-year contract with the association last June. He had not been expected to travel from Rio de Janeiro, where he had returned once the revolution started in February, but proved himself nothing if not dogged in his insistence that he wants to get Libya to the finals.

The only goal against a surprisingly tepid Mozambique side came from Rabee'a Abdullafi after 30 minutes. Libya could have won by more with Djamal Mahamat, who has joined Portugal's Braga, the star of the night.

Libya remain second in their group, a point behind Zambia, who host the decisive meeting between the two countries in their final game in October.

Senegal ease through

Elsewhere in the qualifiers, Senegal confirmed the potential they showed at the start of the campaign and have reached the finals with a round to spare, making up for the disappointment of missing out in 2010. They are basking in a revival that holds the promise of having a squad able to match the achievements of the 2002 side.

It was nine years ago that Senegal reached the Nations Cup Final for the first time, losing in heartbreaking fashion on penalties to Cameroon in Bamako. However, they then went on to beat holders France in the opening game of the World Cup in South Korea and became only the second African side to reach the quarter-finals.

Now there are legitimate hopes that the current team will be able to go one step further at the continental championship in Equatorial Guinea and Gabon next year.

Senegal join Botswana, Burkina Faso and the Ivory Coast as the countries who have already qualified for the 16-team finals. The remaining 10 to join them in the draw on October 29 will be decided on the final weekend of qualifiers, from October 7 to 9.

Already out of the race are defending

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Sign of the times...Libya's players fly their new flag as they celebrate victory over Mozambique in Cairo

National captain Tarek Tayeb was the most vociferous in pledging allegiance to Gaddafi but was nowhere to be seen when the team played in Cairo

champions Egypt, their long reign petering out in feeble fashion, along with Cameroon, one of the former title-holders who were in Senegal's group, and Algeria.

Senegal also disposed of the Democratic Republic of Congo, who as the former Zaire were Africa's football superpower in the 1970s. They won 4-2 away in Lubumbashi in their first qualifier in September last year – as their formidable strike force of Mamadou Niang, Moussa Sow and Papiss Demba Cisse quickly emerged as one of great potential – and then secured their finals place by beating the Congo DR 2-0 at home in the penultimate group game, with Sow scoring both goals.

Coach Amara Traore can draw from a richly talented squad and – other than a home loss in a friendly against Morocco in August – the past 12 months have demonstrated Senegal's increasing prowess and they will go to the finals as one of the favourites.

Ghana, who were World Cup quarter-finalists last year, are not yet sure of their place, needing the minimum of a score draw in the Sudan in their last game, while Nigeria, South Africa and Tunisia must all win at home to stand any chance of qualifying.

Another former champion, Morocco will go through as group winners if, as expected, they beat Tanzania, in their final qualifier. However, they have been pushed all the way by the Central African Republic, one of many unfancied sides who have suddenly emerged in this campaign. Far better known for basketball than football, the Central African Republic had not won a competitive international in almost four decades before the start of these qualifiers.

Stretching out...Senegal's Pape Diakhate (right) tries to keep Tresor Mputu of DR Congo at bay

Niger are top of their group going into their final round and if they finish ahead of both South Africa and Egypt it will be arguably the biggest upset in qualifying history. Egypt were effectively eliminated when *Bafana Bafana* held them in Cairo in June, but South Africa then committed two defensive errors and lost in Niger in a game they should have won. Had they done so, they would have secured their finals place but now Niger lead them by a point.

Uganda are on the brink of their first finals place in 34 years, but they must win a potentially ferocious derby against Kenya to break the long drought.

The 12 group winners, plus the two best runners-up, will join the co-hosts in the finals, which will be played from January 21 to February 12. WS

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SWITZERLAND

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Berne

Constantin back in the limelight

Sion's Europa League ban is a new battle for controversial president

Shades of opinion... Constantin's antics have overshadowed Sion's performances on the pitch

Until Bulat Chagaev came along and sacked four coaches in as many months at Neuchatel Xamax, one Swiss club president stood head and shoulders above all others when it came to outlandish behaviour: Sion's Christian Constantin.

Constantin, who found himself back in the headlines when Sion were kicked out of the Europa League for fielding ineligible players in a play-off against Celtic, has been banned for attacking a linesman, twice taken charge of the team himself and even wrongly accused one of his own players of match fixing.

An architect by trade, Constantin has had two stints at the helm of the small club from the canton of Valais. The first, in 1992 when he was 35, lasted five years and brought them two Swiss league titles and three Swiss Cup wins.

But the cost – over 100 signings were made during that period – was more than the club could afford and Constantin quit when they failed to qualify for the Champions League in 1997.

Sion's financial problems continued, and five years later they lost their licence and were demoted to division three. At that point Constantin, promising to bail them out, returned for a second spell which eventually saw Sion back in the top flight in 2006. In the same season, they also became the first club to win the Swiss Cup while in the second division. But while the club boast the extraordinary record of having been victorious in each of their 12 Swiss Cup Final appearances, it is Constantin's antics which have made the headlines, rather than performances on the field.

> "He's an authoritarian. He has no respect for you and thinks he's the coach"
> **Former Sion coach Nestor Clausen**

One of his most bizarre acts came two years ago when he hinted midfielder Serey Die might have been involved in match fixing. The Ivorian was sent off in the first half of a defeat by Zurich and Constantin implied this might have been part of a plot by gambling rings to rig the match in their opponent's favour.

Public prosecutors found no evidence of match fixing, but there is no record of Constantin apologising for the allegations against his player, who is still at the club.

Constantin is also in the habit of firing coaches – or making their job untenable – and more than 20 have left during his second stint. One, former Argentina international Nestor Clausen, walked out at half-time of a Swiss Cup match against La Chaux-de-Fonds, saying Constantin had come into the dressing room to join the team talk. "He's an authoritarian," says Clausen. "He doesn't respect you and thinks he's the coach."

Perhaps not surprisingly, Constantin has twice appointed himself as coach, once following the sacking of Uli Stielike. When the Swiss League ruled Constantin did not have the necessary coaching credentials, he argued that the German coach was only on sick leave.

Constantin also fancies himself as a legal expert. When Sion were demoted to the third division, he went to court and managed to get them moved up to the second tier, even though the league had started three months earlier.

In 2004, he was given a two-and-a-half-year ban for kicking a linesman in the testicles over a controversial penalty in a second-division game at Kriens. However, he took the case to a civil court, managed to drag it out for four years and eventually got away with a four-month ban and £14,000 fine.

During his first stint, he got a UEFA Cup tie at Spartak Moscow replayed on the grounds that the goals at the Russian club's stadium were too small, arguing the crossbars were 8cm lower than they should have been.

Constantin has twice taken civil action in the current battle with FIFA, who barred Sion from making signings for two transfer periods after they were ruled to have induced Egypt keeper Essam El Hadary to break his contract with Al Ahly in 2008. Having defied the ban by making six signings, Constantin persuaded the players to take their case to a civil court over "their right to work". The court ruled in their favour and the Swiss League felt it had to comply – even though UEFA and FIFA did not.

Having been kicked out of the Europa League, Sion appealed to a civil court in the canton of Valais rather than UEFA's own appeals committee, only to be told that the court could not decide on a case against UEFA which is based in Nyon in another canton.

It is hard to believe, however, that Constantin will let the matter lie. Get ready for another long battle. WS

THE INFAMOUS FIVE

Sion, who beat Celtic 3-1 on aggregate in the Europa League play-off round, were expelled from the competition after they fielded five ineligible players against the Scottish club. UEFA ruled that **Pascal Feindouno**, **Gabri**, **Mario Mutsch**, **Jose Goncalves** and **Billy Ketkeophomphone** should not have been allowed to play as the club were still under a transfer ban imposed after they breached rules over the acquisition of Egyptian goalkeeper **Essam El Hadary** three years ago.

Ineligible... Feindouno

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DAN BRENNAN
in Glasgow

Bleak times

Celtic's late reprieve could not disguise another poor European campaign by Scottish clubs

Scottish football has endured some bleak nights in Europe in recent times, but August 2011 represented a new nadir, as all three of its remaining representatives – Celtic, Hearts and Rangers – went down to aggregate defeats in the last qualifying round for the Europa League.

By that stage, Rangers had already fallen at the first hurdle in the Champions League qualifiers to Swedish side Malmo, while the nation's other Europa League contender, Dundee United, had been eliminated from the second qualifying round by Poland's Slask Wroclaw on July 21 – two days before the start of Scotland's domestic season.

Ironically, one of the key justifications for what was the earliest-ever start to the SPL season was that it would help Scottish clubs in Europe. It didn't help Heart of Midlothian much, as they suffered a 5-0 humiliation at the hands of a visiting Tottenham Hotspur side yet to play a domestic competitive game. That represented the highest-ever margin of defeat on home soil for a Scottish club in Europe, rendering the 0-0 stalemate in the return leg irrelevant.

If that tie emphasised the gulf between English and Scottish football, the performances of Scotland's "Old Firm" exposed a growing inability to unlock tactically astute defences. Celtic, initially held 0-0 at home by Sion – who finished fourth in the Swiss league last season – went down 3-1 on aggregate. Meanwhile, Rangers were also held at home, failing to overturn a 2-1 deficit against Slovenian champions Maribor.

A subsequent legal intervention meant that Celtic were awarded a place in the Europa League group stage as Sion were expelled for fielding new signings in contravention of a FIFA transfer ban relating to irregularities back in 2008. That, however, does little to disguise the problems for Scottish clubs.

Just three years ago Rangers reached the UEFA Cup Final. Despite being comfortably beaten by Zenit St Petersburg, this was an achievement that fed hopes of a European renaissance for Scottish clubs. But the subsequent statistics show the opposite has come to pass.

Since that Final, Rangers have managed just one European win in 22 continental matches (against Bursaspor of Turkey in the Champions League group stages last season). It is a drought that reflects a national trend and over the same period, Scotland's clubs have, collectively, won just 14 of 77 fixtures in European competition.

The financial consequences of European failure will hit Rangers particularly hard at a time when they are embroiled in a wrangle with the UK taxman, as well as a legal dispute with former chief executive Martin Bain, which has led to £500,000 of the club's funds being frozen pending a resolution. In failing to make the Champions League group stage, the Scottish champions missed out on approximately £15million that would have been garnered from UEFA prize money, broadcasting revenues, gate receipts and other income. Meanwhile, Rangers' failure to even qualify for the group stage of the Europa League has deprived them of somewhere in the region of £4m.

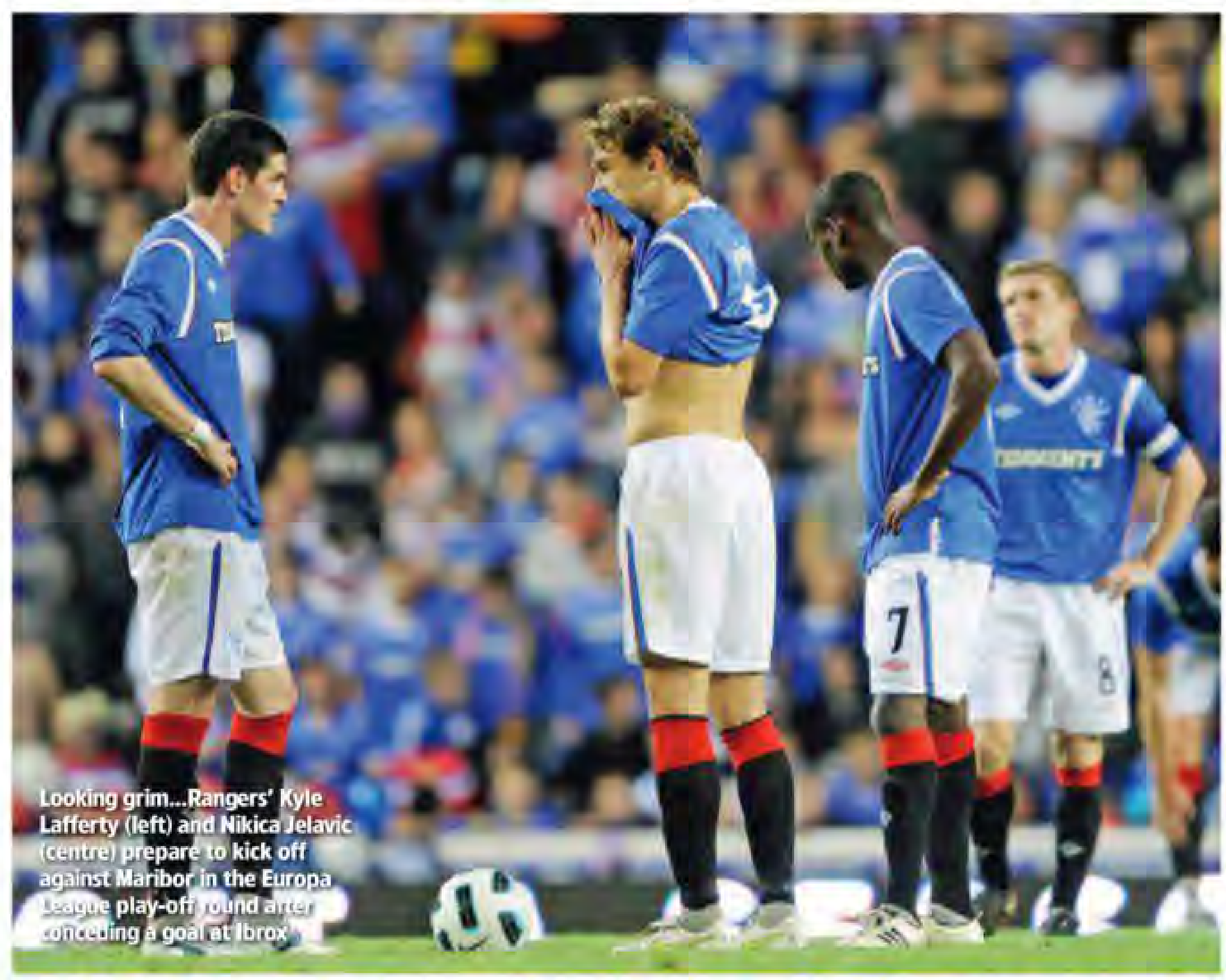
> When Rangers reached the UEFA Cup Final three years ago it fed hopes of a European renaissance for Scottish clubs – but the opposite has come to pass

However, the impact of another poor showing in Europe is not just monetary; it will also make a further dent in Scotland's deteriorating UEFA coefficient ranking. Based on a five-year performance cycle, the UEFA rankings determine how many clubs from each country qualify for European competition and at which stage they enter the fray.

In 2008, Scotland were 10th in the rankings and had one automatic Champions League group-stage place, plus a further team in the second qualifying round, a quota that remained intact until last season. Having slipped to 16th, they now only have one place in the Champions League qualifiers, entering in the second qualifying round.

In the most recent provisional rankings, Scotland had slipped again, to 17th place, putting them behind, among others, Cyprus. And the slide is likely to continue, with a number of countries currently ranked below Scotland still involved in Europe and therefore able to improve their coefficients. Moreover, in 12 months, the residual benefits of Rangers reaching the 2008 UEFA Cup Final – which is still currently factored into the five-year performance calculations – will be lost.

That means Scotland are currently projected to sink to 28th place next season, two places lower than their previous all-time low in 1998, leaving Scottish clubs facing the prospect of unwanted summer city breaks in Europe for many years to come. WS



Looking grim...Rangers' Kyle Lafferty (left) and Nikica Jelavic (centre) prepare to kick off against Maribor in the Europa League play-off round after conceding a goal at Ibrox

HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

Carry on spending

PSG continued their summer recruitment drive right up to the end of the transfer window

Happy days are here again for Paris Saint-Germain, the one-time French footballing giants turned regular laughing stock in recent times. Not only have the capital club secured gigantic Middle Eastern funding that has seen them dubbed the "Manchester City of France", they have also surged back to prominence at a time when their deadliest rivals, Marseille, are going through desperate times, both on and off the pitch.

Under the tutelage of Brazilian sporting director Leonardo, the former PSG player who was lured back from Italy this summer by the Qatari megabucks, the club are trying to fast-track their way into the heart of European football's elite by attempting to combine a sensible sporting strategy with some serious financial muscle.

According to Brazilian midfielder Nene – one of the few star names who was at the club before the Qataris – PSG's first ambition is Champions League qualification for next season. In order to achieve that, of course, coach Antoine Kombouare's side will need to better last term's fourth place in Ligue 1. But, given the level of investment, they will surely be disappointed if they don't have a serious tilt at taking the title from holders Lille this time round.

PSG spent a whopping £75million after the Qatar Sports Investments group bought a controlling 70 per cent stake in the club back in June, bringing nine players in before the transfer window closed in August. There is certainly some quality in the talent they purchased so expensively – with the likes of striker Kevin Gameiro joining from Lorient, midfielder Jeremy Menez signing from Roma, Uruguayan defender Diego Lugano arriving from Fenerbahce and Italian goalkeeper Salvatore Sirigu coming on board from Palermo – but none of the players the club bought in could honestly be seen as marquee signings. The purchases were more or less in line with the aspirations of a club playing in the Europa League and contesting a championship recognised as probably Europe's fourth or fifth best.

However, the signing of Argentina midfielder Javier Pastore from Palermo for a French record £36m can only be seen as a real game-changer, a massive statement of intent that in one fell swoop elevated Paris Saint-Germain from noisy neighbours to a club that should be taken very seriously indeed.

Bonjour Paris...Pastore celebrates scoring the winner against Brest

Coveted talent

There's no doubt that Pastore was one of Europe's most coveted talents. Just 22 years old and precociously gifted, the native of Cordoba had attracted the attention of any number of major European sides, including English powerhouse Chelsea. So the fact that he chose to join the PSG revolution was a huge fillip for the club's ambitions and a very obvious media coup.

After watching Pastore score the only goal in a 1-0 victory over Brest at a buzzing Parc Des Princes, it was easy to see why the midfielder is already the darling of the capital. He plays with his head up, sees a pass quickly and has a great touch – as his delicately taken goal in that game amply proved.

After five games PSG were sitting pretty in fourth place with 10 points and one can only assume they are going to improve as Kombouare's newcomers start to gel properly. Yet watching Pastore begs the question of whether his surprising choice in coming to Paris had less to do with PSG's immediate ambitions and more to do with his own particular qualities.

Known as "*El Flaco*" (the skinny one), Pastore is something of an anomaly in the modern game: a tall and delicate-looking lad who is all about touch and finesse. Those in the know in Italy questioned his ability to cope in the highly physical English Premier League after watching him fade in his previous Serie A campaigns. Having seen him in France, I would definitely harbour the same concerns. He's a joy to watch, for sure, but the less-robust Ligue 1, where referees often seem intent on totally eradicating the physical side of the game, definitely suits him. Frankly, England might have ruined the boy.

Whatever his reasons for coming, though, French football is a richer place for Pastore's arrival – unless you happen to be a Marseille supporter, of course.

While PSG fans are enjoying their embarrassment of riches and revelling in their status as French football's "loadsamoneys", Didier Deschamps' club have been horribly out of sorts. After five

WHAT THE PAPERS SAY...

L'EQUIPE

"There was nothing to see," proclaimed the headline in *L'Equipe* the morning after France's 0-0 draw with Romania in their Euro 2012 qualifier.

The playing surface in Bucharest, described by Vincent Dulac as "apocalyptic", cut up badly and made playing conditions very difficult, but the result kept France top of their group.

In order to qualify automatically for next summer's finals, *Les Blues* must beat Albania at home on October 7 and avoid defeat against second-placed Bosnia in Paris on October 11.

Il n'y avait rien à voir

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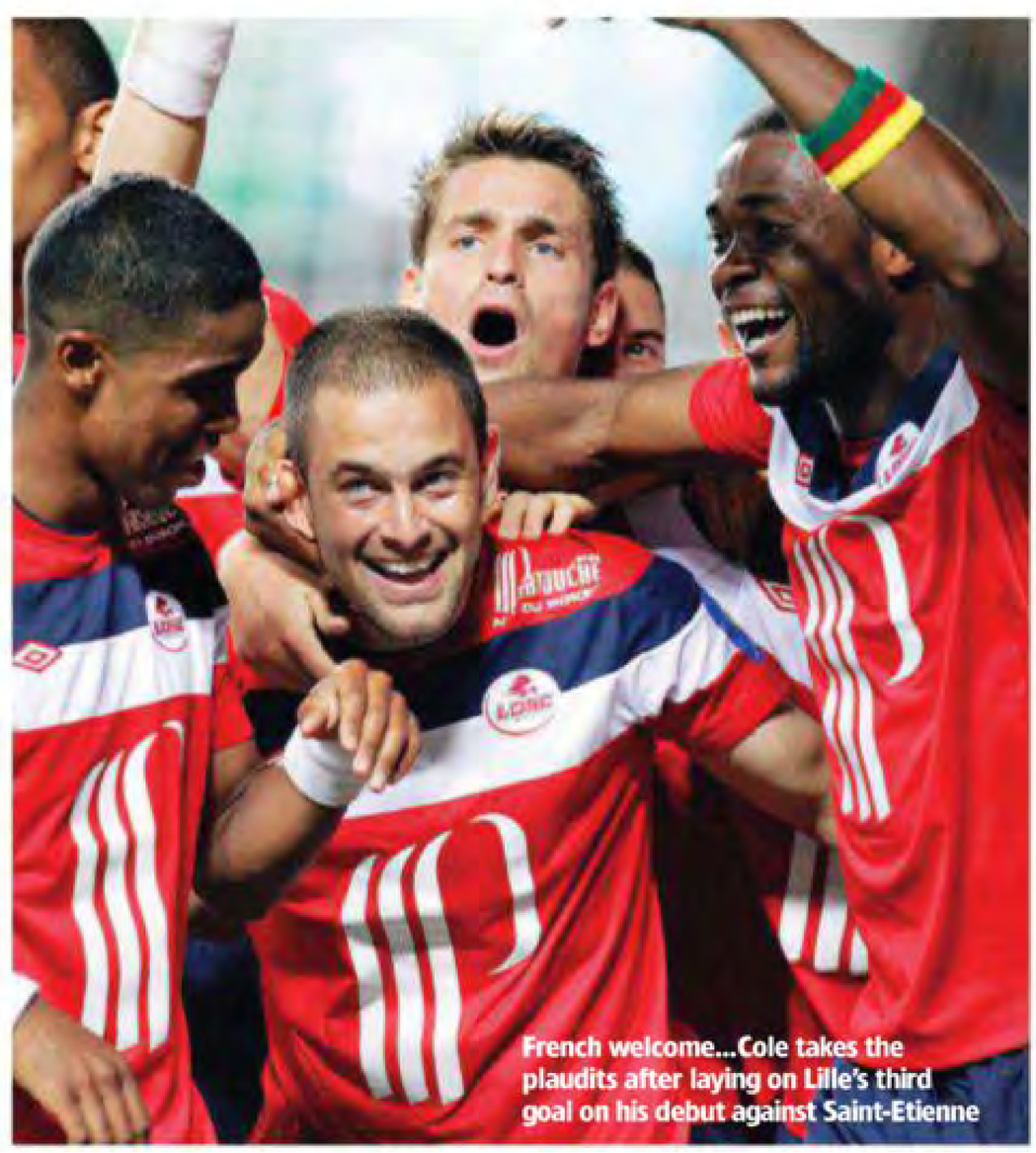

French welcome...Cole takes the plaudits after laying on Lille's third goal on his debut against Saint-Etienne

Marseille's vociferous supporters won't stand for being humiliated by PSG for very long

matches L'OM had failed to win a game and were just one place above the relegation zone, having been booed off their own pitch following a 1-0 home defeat by Rennes.

The club spent just £9.5m in the close season – almost eight times less than PSG – and brought only one top-level signing to the south coast, Bordeaux's national team defender Alou Diarra, amid rumours of enforced belt-tightening behind the scenes. While the wind of financial prudence is blowing hard everywhere in France – with the notable exception of Paris – Marseille's vociferous supporters won't stand for being humiliated by PSG for very long.

The clubs are due to meet in the league at the Stade Velodrome on November 27 and fireworks are guaranteed.

Elsewhere in Ligue 1, there has been great excitement at the arrival of Joe Cole, the first England international to play in France since Chris Waddle. Cole has joined Lille from Liverpool on a season-long loan and marked his first appearance for his new club, off the bench away at Saint-Etienne, by setting up a goal for striker Ludovic Obraniak after a lovely hypnotic run and cutback. "It's Cole Time," shouted the French TV commentators in pidgin English as Lille won 3-1.

Cole looks as if he's going to have a whale of a time playing alongside the ridiculously talented Eden Hazard, who scored two beauties himself in the same game. Interviewed after the match alongside Hazard, Cole said he knew all about the Belgium midfielder already and that it was a pleasure to play together, before signing off with a flourish and a *"merci beaucoup"*.

As starts to a new foreign adventure go, this was about as good as it gets. WS

SEAN CREEDON
in Dublin

Romance of the Rovers

The south Dubliners have set a Europa League first for the Irish

It's probably fitting that Shamrock Rovers are the first League of Ireland club to play in the group stages of the Europa League, as they were also the first – in September 1957 – to play in Europe, when they were paired with Manchester United in the European Cup.

Now the Hoops are making history once again, four months after the Europa League Final was played in Dublin. The irony is that European success has come at a time when the majority of Irish clubs, Rovers included, have reverted to part-time football after an expensive experiment at going full time proved impossible to sustain.

Rovers, who were ranked 324th by UEFA before the start of the European campaign, secured their lucrative group-stage place thanks to a 2-1 away win against Partizan Belgrade. The clubs had drawn 1-1 in Dublin in the first leg and, in truth, there was little optimism among the 43 Hoops supporters who made the trip to Serbia for the return. When Vladimir Volkov put Partizan ahead after 35 minutes it looked like the end of the road, but a stunning equaliser from Pat Sullivan then Stephen O'Donnell's penalty in the second period of extra time saw Rovers pull off a shock.

"I will never tire of talking about that goal," said Sullivan of his 25-yard volley. "It's great to score like that and it's extra special when it's a goal that means something, rather than a spectacular goal when you are 2-0 down."

Manager Michael O'Neill admitted: "We have got this squad together for approximately €600,000 [£550,000]. Partizan probably had players who will earn that much in a season.

"I doubt whether a club has been able to progress this far with that level of budget."

The Hoops had to sweat for a few weeks before UEFA gave them permission to erect 2,600 temporary seats at Tallaght Stadium, bringing the capacity up to 8,600. Tallaght is owned by South Dublin County Council and rented by Rovers, who brought the capacity up to 12,000 for a friendly against Real Madrid in July last year. If they had not got the go-ahead to play in Tallaght, Rovers would have had to switch their three home games to the Aviva Stadium, which would have been expensive and there would probably have been a lot of empty seats for two of the three games.

Club chairman Jonathan Roche said: "From the day we qualified we knew we had either the option of taking the games to the Aviva or upgrading Tallaght Stadium. We wanted to play in Tallaght if at all possible and we are delighted that it has worked out that way.

"It is wonderful for us as a club, but also for the Tallaght area in general."

After the previous owners, the Kilcoyne family, sold their old ground, Glenmalure Park in Milltown in the mid 1980s, Rovers led a nomadic existence and ground-shared with several other Dublin clubs until 2009, when the council, with the help of government grant aid, built Tallaght Stadium for the club. After going into examinership in July 2005 a group of supporters formed the 400 club, with members agreeing to contribute €400 (£350). That club has now expanded to around 500 who contribute €500 (£437) per month. Rovers also have 3,000 season-ticket holders.

> "Our squad cost about €600,000. Partizan had players who will earn that in a season" **Michael O'Neill**

Qualification for the group stage of the Europa League has meant several extra games and O'Neill signed two new players during the transfer window to give him extra cover. Rohan Ricketts, one of the few players to move from Arsenal to Tottenham Hotspur, and Scotland-born Jim Paterson are now with the Hoops, who will lose full-back Enda Stevens to Aston Villa at the end of the season.

"It's brilliant to become the first Irish club to play in the group stage of the Europa League, but ultimately retaining our Premier Division title is our main priority as we want to get back into Europe next season," says O'Neill.

"The Europa League is important simply because the money on offer for picking up points in Europe is very attractive. One point in the Europa League is worth more than winning the FAI Cup. If something is to fall by the wayside, it may be the FAI Cup, although we sincerely hope that won't be the case."

Earlier this season O'Neill brought in former Northern Ireland colleague Jim Magilton as his assistant when Trevor Crolly left. Rovers supporters are now worried that the club could lose O'Neill and Magilton, who are being tipped as possible replacements for the current under-fire Northern Ireland manager, Nigel Worthington. WS

Walking on air...Sullivan (centre right) leaps with delight after scoring for Shamrock in Belgrade

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STEVE MENARY

Pacific is terrific for the islanders

Games triumph puts national team in good heart as they set out on World Cup adventure

Gold medallist...Wakanume (no2) in action against Guam

New Caledonia will enter the World Cup qualifiers next year with renewed confidence after the French territory successfully defended its Pacific Games football title.

Staged every four years, football at the Games was originally intended to form the early rounds of the Oceania World Cup qualifiers, until Guam – a member of the Asian confederation – entered and the idea was dropped.

On home territory, New Caledonia qualified for the Games semi-finals despite losing a final group game to the Solomon Islands. After overcoming Tahiti 3-1 in the semis, they gained revenge in the Final, beating the Solomons 2-0.

Scorers Georges Gope-Fenepej and Marius Bako were among six players from club side Magenta, who were New Caledonia's O-League representatives last season. Coach Christophe Coursimault also called up five overseas players, including Italy-based veteran Vincent Taua of Real Isernia, who had a long Serie C career with the likes of Cavese, Nocerina and Benevento.

Taua did not feature at the Games, but French trio Dominque Wacalie of Bourges, Joel Wakanume from Imphy Decize and Laval's Cesar Lolohea all played in the Final, alongside Iamel Kabeu of Tahitians Manu Ura.

> New Caledonia's Pacific Games win was their fifth in total, going back to 1963

New Caledonia's latest win was their fifth in total, stretching back to the first Pacific Games tournament in 1963. The territory has a long football history, with the Federation Caledonienne de Football (FCF) formed in 1928. In 1970, Australia played two matches in New Caledonia winning 3-1 and 1-0, with *World Soccer* describing the tourists as struggling with "rock hard grounds, 85 degrees heat and hair-raising refereeing".

Conditions remain tough, but admittance to FIFA seven years ago – on the dubious grounds that an independence referendum is scheduled before 2019 – has brought benefits. FIFA provided $400,000 in Goal funds towards a $907,000 artificial turf pitch in Noumea and fully funded a $400,000 extension to the FCF's technical centre.

New Caledonia's 20 club sides play in three regional championships – Province North, Province South and an Islands championship – before a national play-off, where a big game involving teams such as Magenta or Mont Dore can draw crowds of 4,000.

Magenta reached the 2004-05 Oceania Club Championship Final, losing 2-0 to Sydney, and last season beat USL Dunkerque on their way to the eighth round of the French Cup – the best performance by a New Caledonian side in 42 years.

Plans were floated during Australia's failed World Cup bid to enter a Pacific Islands' team in the A-League that would play some matches in Noumea, but Oceania Football Confederation secretary Tai Nicholas now says this is "not financially viable at this stage".

Ambitious players, therefore, must leave New Caledonia, although many, like the quartet who went to Monaco for a trial in Easter 2010, do not succeed. "The problem is recruitment and distance," says FCF official Joanes Sukemi. "Players often have to leave their parents at 16 and get homesick."

Now better known as a New Caledonian politician, Marc Kanyan played in the France side that reached the quarter-finals of the 1968 Olympics before playing professionally for Bastia, Nimes and Ajaccio, while Jacques Zimako, who appeared for Bastia, Saint-Etienne and Sochaux, won 13 caps for France. Paris Saint-Germain coach Antoine Kombouare was also born in New Caledonia, but the island's most famous player is Christian Karembeu.

The 1998 World Cup winner was the driving force behind the organisation of the biennial Coupe de l'Outre Mer for French territories. New Caledonia failed to get past the 2010 group stage after a 4-0 thrashing from eventual winners Martinique but will start out on the path for Brazil with confidence.

They will face Vanuatu and Tahiti – both vanquished at the Pacific Games – plus an undecided regional minnow in a draw that offers every chance of further progress. **WS**

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

New Caledonia is a special collective of France, a group of islands about 2,000 miles east of Australia.

Population 256,000
Size 6,500 square miles
Capital Noumea
Language French
Religion Roman Catholic

FloreKegg.com

HAITI

JAMES MONTAGUE
James Montague in Port-au-Prince

Back from the brink

Rain can't dampen the spirits at the national team's first game since last year's earthquake

It was inevitable that the heavens would open and rain on Haiti's parade. Dark clouds had swirled, rumbled and flashed portentously around Port-au-Prince, its shattered capital, for three days without delivering the promised rain to take the sting out of the brutal summer heat. But it arrived, two hours before kick-off, as 10,000 Haitians, maybe more, tried and failed to crush through the one open door into the Sylvio Cator stadium.

A police blockade had been thrown around the stadium, such was the fear that Haiti's fragile civil truce would be blown apart by the national team's first match since the devastating earthquake reduced most of the city to rubble – a 2014 World Cup qualifier against the US Virgin Islands.

The stadium itself had become a slum for hundreds of families, just one of the ubiquitous, hellish tented cities built on any scrap of open space, football pitches included. They had now been moved on, their presence erased with a lick of paint and a brand new artificial pitch laid a few days before, with a rumoured £1,265 payment from the government as compensation.

Creole rap music is played at ear-splitting level, while the smell is of fresh paint, burning refuse and excrement from the open sewers nearby. The crowd push forward in the hope of getting in, the police using shields and clubs to beat them back.

"I am very happy, we will have our victory. This will be a victory for all of Haiti," explains Johnny, a 28-year-old engineer from the suburb of Petionville who watches the drama unfold, ticket in hand. And then the rains come, slowly at first, growing into a torrential downpour just in time to dampen the anger as the fans run to take cover.

"Life is very hard here," adds Johnny. "With God everything is possible. But this is the reason why football can change something. I hope Haiti scores 10 goals."

Headquarters levelled

Haitian football, like virtually every aspect of Haitian society, was almost terminally injured when the earthquake hit in January 2010. The Haitian Football Federation's headquarters were levelled, killing more than 30 of its staff. Its president, Yves Jean-Bart, was one of only two survivors.

As many as 300,000 perished in the quake, and faced with such devastation, many might consider football in Haiti to be of minor importance. But Jean-Bart, knowing the game has such a place in the country's heart, went on to rebuild the federation and hired a Brazilian coach to achieve the dream of emulating Haiti's golden generation who qualified for the 1974 World Cup.

"My first impression was to take a flight back to Brazil," said coach Edson Tavares. "You don't realise how strong the situation was here. The country was completely devastated. Today, though, is a paradise compared with last year... you could be walking the street and find the [severed] legs of people, the arms of people."

Tavares paid for his own flight to get to Europe, hired a car and visited the 60 professional players of Haitian descent who play in France, England, Spain and beyond.

"I travelled to five countries to persuade the players to play for their original country," he said. "Only one refused. We contacted 20 players. And they are here. Most of them don't speak Creole. One only speaks Italian. One only German."

The squad for the US Virgin Islands game was full of professional players, many of whom had never been to Haiti before in their lives, such as Paris Saint-Germain forward Jean-Eudes Maurice and goalkeeper Steward Ceus, who was born and bred in New York and plays for the Colorado Rapids.

"Coming here left me speechless," said Ceus. "The fans come after training, before training, crowding around the bus. My passion for soccer has always been there and I always wished that the people around me shared that passion. For the first time I found the passion I've been looking for."

Tavares hopes the professionalism of his new team will rub off on local players who he believes are some of the best in the world.

"I have never seen a country with so many talents as here," he said. "If you put these guys in Manchester United and Barcelona, they would be great players. The problem is, to be a great player you need good food and a good environment. Here there is nothing."

On the morning of the match the country's president, Michel Martelly,

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Haiti captain Wilner Nazaire featured on the cover of *World Soccer* in August 1974, shaking hands with his Italy counterpart Giacinto Facchetti, ahead of their World Cup group game in Munich. That was as good as it got for Haiti, in their first, and so far only, World Cup. They were beaten 3-1 by Italy and then lost 7-0 to Poland and 4-1 to Argentina.

Hands on hearts...Haiti's players feel the emotion as the national anthem is played before their World Cup qualifier against the US Virgin Isalnds

> "Coming here left me speechless. For the first time I found the passion I had been looking for"
> **Haiti's Colorado-based goalkeeper Steward Ceus**

a former singer known as "Sweet Micky", arrives to meet the players. He shakes each by the hand, presents them with a flag and they all sing the national anthem.

"There's a new will to show a new face of Haiti," says the President. "We have natural talents here coming from all around the world.

"Haiti is ready to show that new face. In the past we talk about our problems and issues. But today is a chance to prove that Haiti can be a great nation and can be victorious.

"I couldn't express in words what Haiti would be like if...when, not if, we

In the thick of it...Kervens Belfort Fils tries to escape the attentions of Virgin Islanders Derrick Smith (left) and Lishati Bailey

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Flying the flag...a street trader outside Port-au-Prince's Sylvio Cator Stadium

Joy of six...Haiti celebrate their final goal against the US Virgin Islands

All together...the players huddle as Tavares (centre) gives his pre-match team talk

Tour of duty...President Martelly in team shirt greets the fans

qualify for the 2014 World Cup."

In the end, it was no contest. As a band played incessantly in front of a capacity crowd, Johnny's wish for 10 goals is almost granted. Six are scored, and the post is hit three times, sending the crowd delirious. The next day, Haiti's main newspaper, *Le Nouvelliste*, puts the result on the front page: "Haiti stomps on the Virgin Islands 6-0."

Ceus, who was a virtual spectator until the final whistle, says: "I did touch the ball once. But not with my hands."

This is a rare good day

The team lines up as the President greets each player, knowing that in a country faced with almost insurmountable problems this is a rare good day. The President leaves in his motorcade as the thousands of people, who had earlier threatened to riot before the rains came, now joyously mob his car. Martelly's aides stand on the sidelines making the most of the situation, handing out campaign stickers that are gleefully peeled and stuck to foreheads, arms, posts and walls. They read: "*Prezidan Martelly: Viktwa pou pep la*" (President Martelly: victory for the people).

> "You could put these guys in Barcelona or Manchester United and they would be great players"
> **Haiti's Brazilian coach Edson Tavares**

But when Haiti step out for the next qualifier on the road to Brazil, it looks as though the president's electioneering came a fraction too early.

The first time Ceus touches the ball with his own hands this time is to pick it out of the back of his net at the Stadion Ergilio Hato in Curacao.

Haiti are playing the Dutch territory – which is officially an independent member of the Kingdom of Netherlands – five days later, and Curacao lead 2-1 at half-time. The 4,000 previously boisterous Haitian expats, who appear to outnumber the home support by about eight to one, are silent. But Tavares switches to 3-5-2 for the second half and watches Maurice and Portland Timbers' James Marcelin dominate as Haiti score three unanswered goals to secure victory.

In the future are potential matches against Mexico or, the dream ticket, the USA. But the crunch game will not be in Mexico City or New York, it will be at the Antigua Recreation ground against Antigua & Barbuda – where cricket legend Viv Richards hit the fastest-ever test century. Their national football team is led by English coach Tom Curtis, a former Chesterfield player during the 1990s, and they have been one of the surprises of the World Cup qualifiers.

But, for now at least, the people of Haiti can just enjoy the fact that their national side has brought them something that has been in short supply for so long: hope. WS

FloreKiss.com

ITALY

PADDY AGNEW
in Rome

No pain, all gain in Euro qualifiers

The *Azzurri* cruised through to Poland and Ukraine

Winner...Pazzini finishes off Slovenia

For once, Italy did not struggle to qualify for a major tournament. Early September wins against the Faroe Islands and Slovenia were enough to see Italy book their place at next summer's Euro 2012 finals in Poland and Ukraine.

On paper, Italy's qualification looks mighty impressive. In the history of European Championship qualifiers, never has an Italy side gained so many points (22 out of a possible 24 so far) and never has an Italy side qualified with two games still to play (away to Serbia and at home to Northern Ireland). Furthermore, the current goal difference of 16 for and just one against looks pretty good too.

In reality, however, after impressing in a 2-1 friendly defeat of the World and European champions Spain in August, Italy were characteristically far from convincing in two somewhat fortuitous 1-0 wins in the last two Euro qualifiers. One had to feel a little sorry for Brian Kerr and his plucky Faroes team who lost out in Torshavn to an arguably offside goal from Antonio Cassano. Worse still, the industrious Islanders hit the woodwork in either half. By the end of the game, it was difficult not to agree with 1982 World Cup-winner Fulvio Collovati, these days a commentator for state TV, when he said: "You'd have to admit that they [the Faroe Islands] probably deserved a draw."

Likewise, Italy's 1-0 win against Slovenia in Florence owed something to Dame Fortune. Having started well, the home side seemed to lose control of the game and a goalless draw seemed on the cards until Giampaolo Pazzini pounced on a defensive error to hit an 85th-minute winner.

In one sense, it was fitting that three key figures in Cesare Prandelli's new-look team – namely Cassano, Pazzini and Mario Balotelli – had a major say in Italy's qualification.

> "[The Faroe Islands] probably deserved a draw" Fulvio Collovati

Against Slovenia, Italy had looked a much better team following the 75th-minute introduction of Balotelli for Riccardo Montolivo. The Manchester City striker put himself about to great effect, causing all sorts of problems for the visitors' defence. As he prepares for next summer, Prandelli can take comfort from the consideration that his faith in not one but two "bad boys", Balotelli and Cassano, has so far paid a rich dividend.

Other new names to have impressed in his team are midfielder Thiago Motta and defenders Andrea Ranocchia and Federico Balzaretti.

Who knows, by next summer, this could be a very useful side indeed. **WS**

EURO 2012: THE NEW BOYS

GIAMPAOLO PAZZINI
The Internazionale striker has not been prolific for the national side but he scored the crucial goal against Slovenia that secured qualification for Euro 2012.

THIAGO MOTTA
The Brazil-born midfielder, who had previously represented his homeland at under-23 level, received his first call-up by Italy earlier this year and has now won five caps.

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November issue on sale October 21

- Club focus Shakhtar Donetsk
- Inside Argentina's hooligan gangs
- Euro 2012 Countdown continues

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PLAYER Biography

Karim Benzema

Back in favour for club and country, the French front runner looks set to finally fulfil his undoubted potential. By Nick Bidwell

A sombrero is not only a Mexican hat; in football-speak it means flicking the ball over an opponent's head and then collecting it on the other side – and it says everything about the on-field chutzpah and prodigious technical talent of the young Karim Benzema that he successfully pulled off such a trick a few minutes into his inaugural Ligue 1 outing, as a substitute for Lyon against Metz in January 2005.

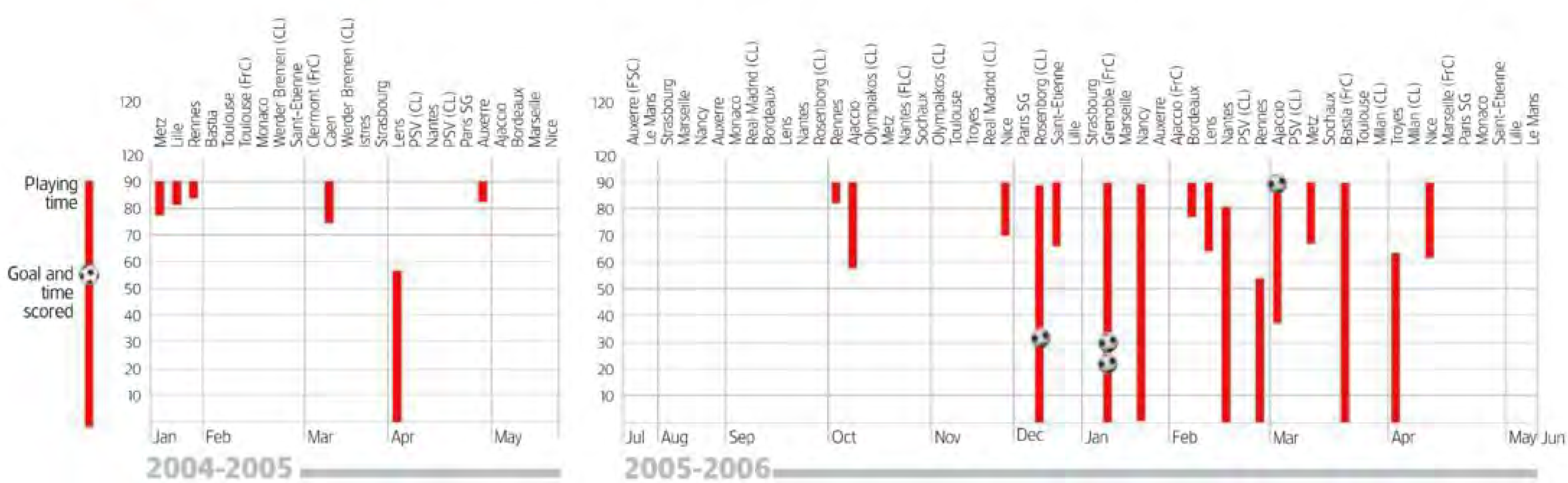
The sight of a 17-year-old debutant demonstrating so much self-assurance and nerve may have come as a shock to those spectators who witnessed it on the night, but it would not have surprised anyone who had already crossed the young striker's path at the club's training complex, which had been his second home from the age of eight. Although still a timid adolescent, on the pitch he had long since graduated to adulthood, very much aware he had a special talent; one which, with time, would take him to the hallowed halls of Real Madrid and France's national team.

To illustrate the two sides of the young Benzema's persona – both the wide-eyed innocent and the supremely confident footballer – insiders at Lyon like to tell the story of an incident early in his career. Told that he must make an introductory speech at a dinner, the youngster's tongue-tied attempt at holding an audience initially had his team-mates sniggering, only for the youngster to belatedly find a voice

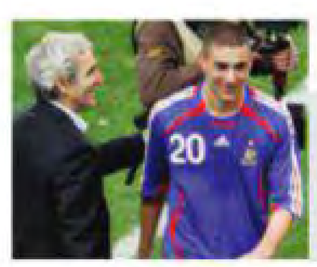
TIMELINE: EVERY MATCH, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY GOAL

WC World Cup qualifier
ECF Euro Championship Finals
EC Euro Championship qualifier
CL Champions League
FrC French Cup
FLC French League Cup
FSC French Super Cup
SC Spanish Cup
SS Spanish Super Cup

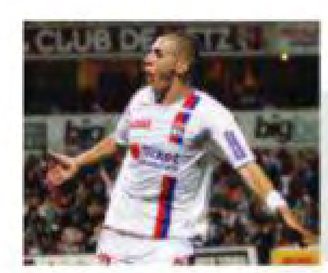
KEY Lyon · Real Madrid · France



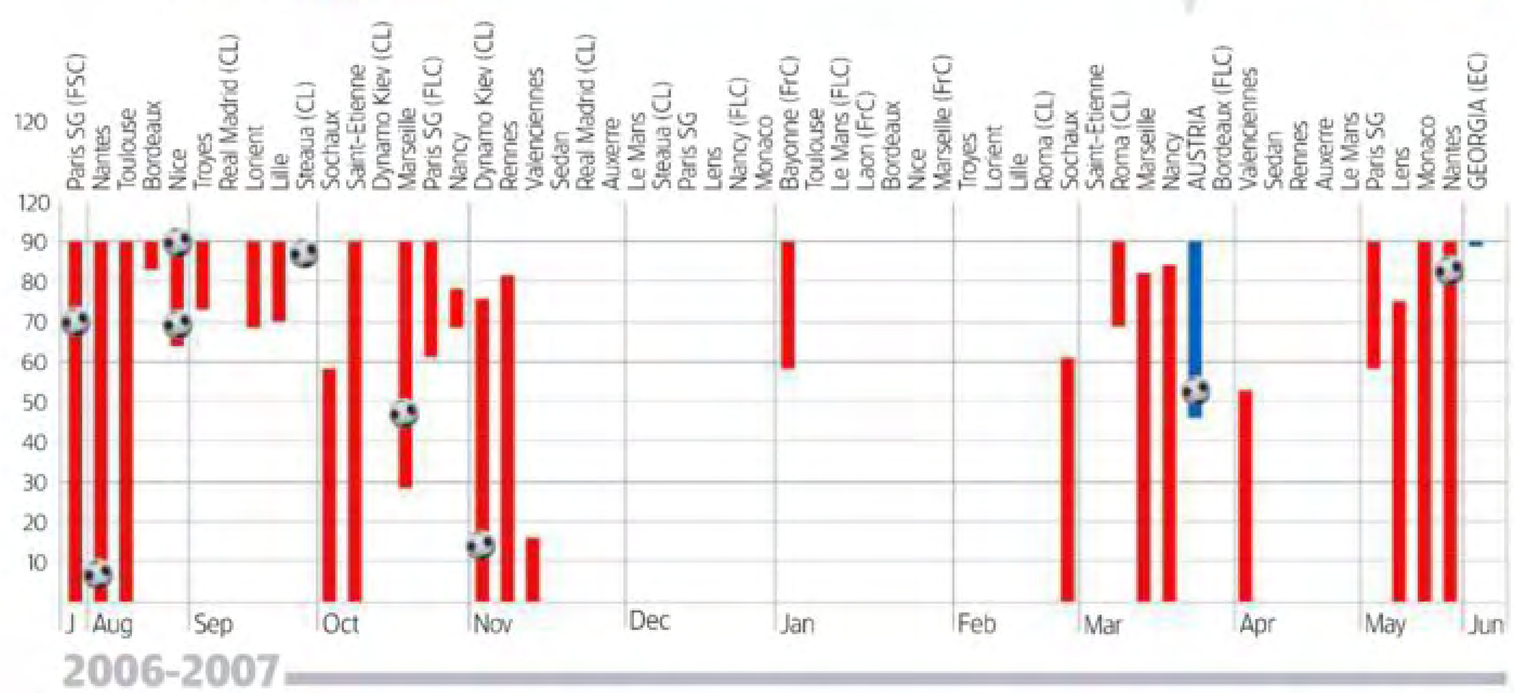
Call to arms...Benzema milks the acclaim after scoring for France against Brazil in a friendly in Paris earlier this year

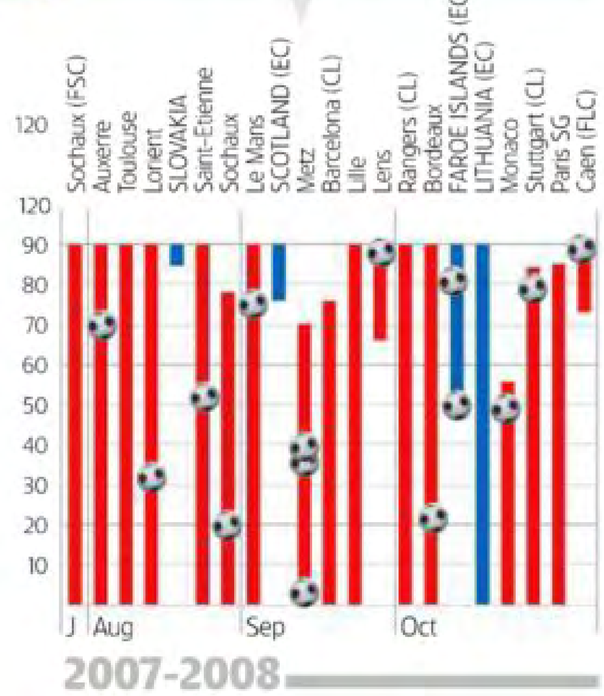


Mar 28, 2007 – appears as a second-half substitute for his international debut in a friendly against Austria and scores within nine minutes of coming on, much to the delight of France coach Raymond Domenech.



Sep 15, 2007 – scores his first professional hat-trick with three first-half goals for Lyon in a 5-1 win away to Metz at the Saint Symphorien Stadium.





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FACT FILE

Karim Benzema

Nationality
French

Age
23 (19.12.87)

Place of birth
Lyon, France

Height
6ft (1.84m)

Position
Forward

Teams
Lyon 2004-09,
Real Madrid
2009-present

Honours
France
Euro Under-17 Championship 2004
Lyon
Ligue 1 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; French Cup 2008; French Super Cup 2006, 2007
Real Madrid
Spanish Cup 2011

Athletic...Benzema in action for Lyon against Monaco

Nice to see you... Benzema arrives at St Denis for a France training session

he never thought he had and announce: "Carry on laughing. But do not forget that if I'm here now it's to take your place." Touché.

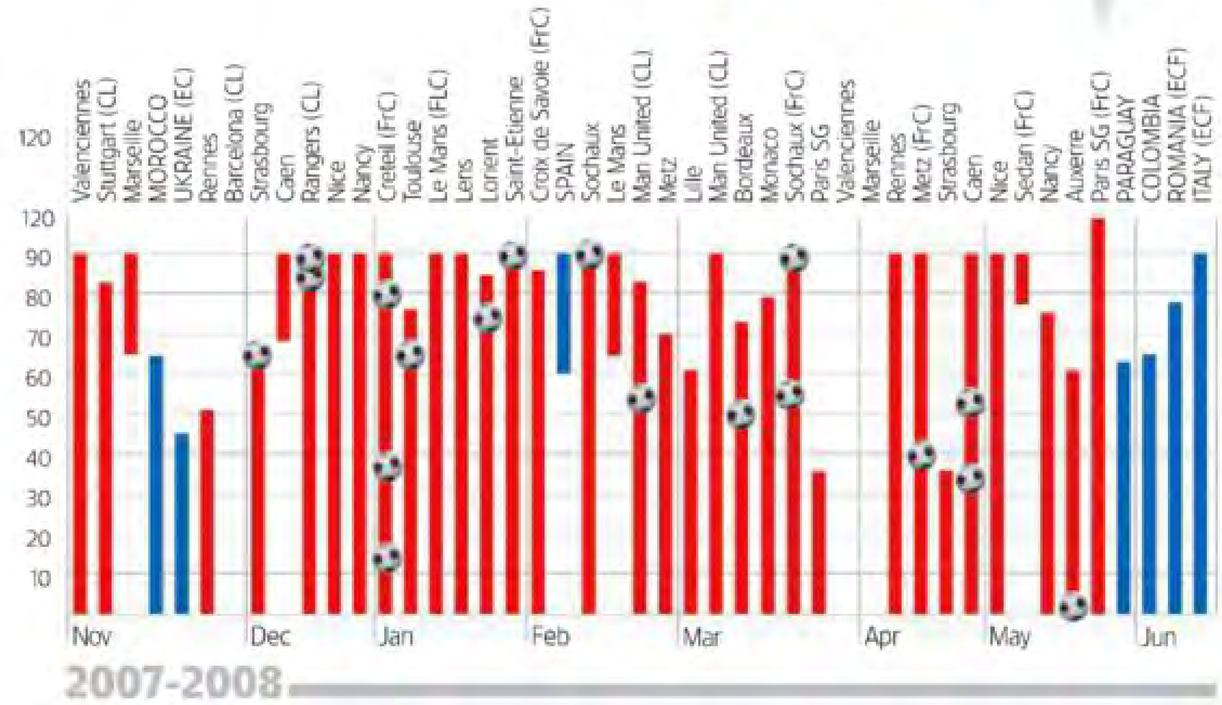
One of 10 children born and raised in the Lyon suburb of Bron by Algerian immigrant parents, Karim's ability with a ball at his feet had Lyon scouts desperate to induct him into their academy system. Yet despite all his gifts as a schoolboy front runner, he spent a lot of his time at the *centre de formation* treading water and, by the time he had progressed to the club's under-15 squad, he was invariably used as a substitute, seemingly only brought on late in a game to run down the clock.

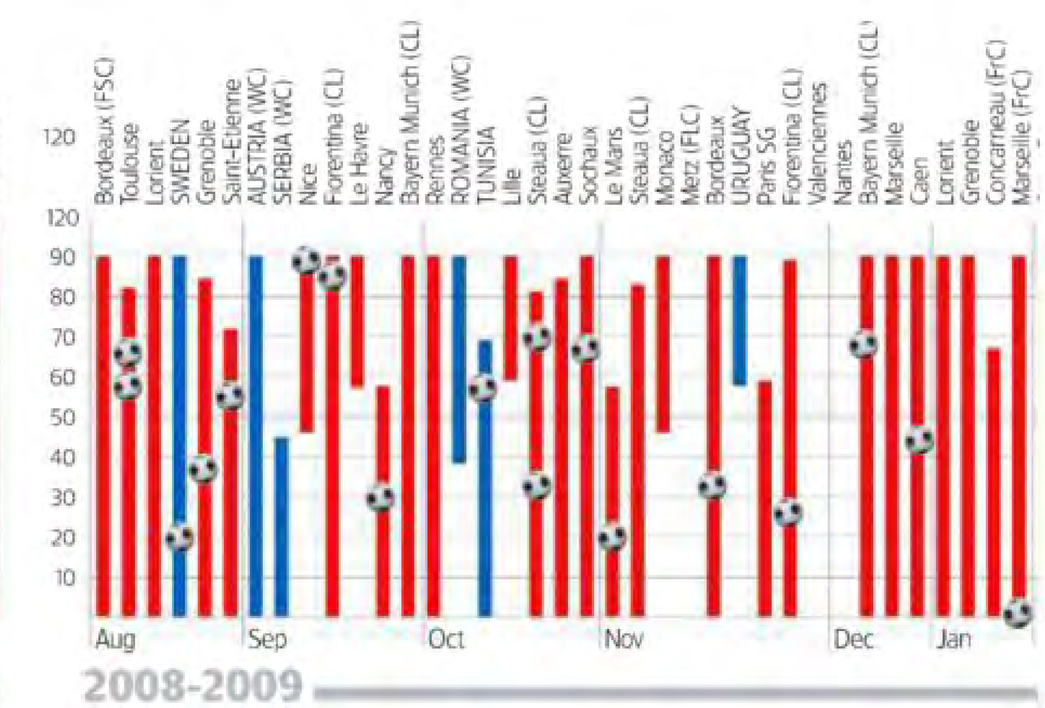
However, two men were determined to make sure his vast potential was not squandered. Convinced that the teenager could go as far as he wanted in the game, Lyon under-16s coach Armand Garrido made it his mission to polish the diamond he had found in the dust, while the club's former goal machine turned boardroom advisor Bernard Lacombe was sufficiently impressed on first catching a glimpse of the 15-year-old that he willingly became his mentor. Every Friday, until he left for Real Madrid in August 2009, Benzema would meet Lacombe to talk football and stroll the Stade Gerland pitch, with the latter always ending their chats with a precise prediction of his protege's forthcoming weekend: a goal in the first 20 minutes, then two goals in the last quarter-of-an-hour. Uncannily, that prediction was frequently on the money.

It did not take long for the work of Lacombe and Garrido to bear fruit. Benzema scored 38 goals in one season for the under-16s and kept up the good work with the under-18s, compelling head coach Paul Le Guen to draft him

KEY ■ Lyon ■ Real Madrid ■ France

May 24, 2008 – just a week after securing the Ligue 1 title at Auxerre, Benzema celebrates a league and cup double following the 1-0 French Cup win against PSG at the Stade de France.





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Champion... Benzema helps hoist the Ligue 1 trophy after Lyon clinch the 2007-08 title at Auxerre

into the first-team squad. Yet for all his phenomenal ability, and the pace, power and coolness in front of goal, his early years in the professional ranks were not nearly as satisfying as they should have been. Both Le Guen and his successor Gerard Houllier preferred to use Benzema in short, sharp bursts, as a deluxe back-up. When he did start he often lined up out of position on the left flank.

The frustration in him grew and his state of mind was not improved by a series of thigh-muscle problems that

> After four domestic titles the time had come to move on

he was to experience during the 2006-07 campaign.

Fortunately, everything fell neatly into place for "Benz" the following season. In the wake of the twin departure that summer of strikers John Carew and Sylvain Wiltord, new coach Alain Perrin had no hesitation in making him the focal point of his attack. And how well the decision panned out, with Benzema's 20-goal haul not only propelling Lyon to their seventh consecutive league title but also earning him his first *Trophee du Meilleur Buteur* as Ligue 1's top marksman.

Time to move on

Another 17 league goals the following term maintained the supersonic momentum. But after four domestic championship winners' medals, innumerable goalscoring exploits and no fewer than five upwardly revised contracts, the time had come to move on. Although Manchester United - against whom he had impressed in the Champions League - were persistent suitors, Real Madrid, the club he had supported as a boy, were always in pole position. Certainly Real president Florentino Perez wanted him very badly, even being prepared to fly to France personally to meet the object of his desire and seal a £30million transfer.

Now a galactico, Benzema toasted his dream come true by cracking open a bottle...of cola.

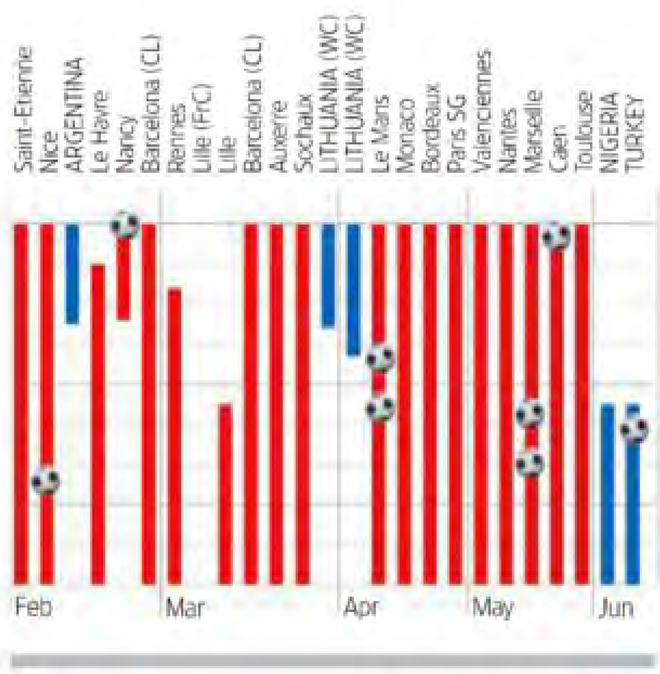
Feted like a rock star on his unveiling at the Bernabeu, Benzema would not stay top of the bill for long. For his first season-and-a-half in white he struggled to establish himself as a starter and Real boss Jose Mourinho, ever one to distribute home truths, publicly criticised him last term for not showing enough energy in a morning training session, commenting: "Maybe we should start at midday so you can be more involved."

Some influential voices in the Spanish media, such as *AS* editor Pedro Pablo San Martin, have claimed that Mourinho simply does not rate Benzema – "he just

My dream has come true...Benzema is unveiled as a Real Madrid player at the Bernabeu

Aug 29, 2009 – after signing for £30million, Benzema makes his Real Madrid debut in the 3-2 home win against Deportivo La Coruna.

Feb 16, 2010 – plays against his old club for the first time, in a 1-0 defeat in the first leg of the Champions League round of 16. Benzema missed the return leg, a 1-1 draw that put Real out of Europe.



doesn't believe in him; not as a first choice or even as a number 12" – but the Frenchman is made of sterner stuff than his rather laid-back character indicates, and subsequently he has worked hard to turn things around and convinced Mourinho that he can be relied upon. In the second half of last season he was excellent and he finished the campaign with 15 Liga goals. A further six goals in the Champions League clearly did his confidence no end of good and greatly pleased Perez, who from the outset has backed Benzema to make good.

Certainly Mourinho now seems to be pushing the right buttons. In a bid to stay on top of his game, Benzema went keep-fit crazy this summer and – thanks to a regime of swimming, cycling and a week in an Italian spa – he managed to lose over a stone. Little wonder he was Real's most in-form player in pre-season, on a creative as well as a goalscoring high.

At international level he had looked assured of a glittering future for *Les Bleus* after marking his full debut for France with a goal against Austria in March 2007. But, thus far, the 2004 Euro Under-17 winner's senior career has, on the whole, been anticlimactic. At Euro 2008 his performances, albeit in a disastrous collective, left much to be desired, while in 2009 he misguidedly revealed on a TV programme that his relationship with national team boss Raymond Domenech was not the best and he had not felt particularly motivated as a second-half substitute in a 2010 World Cup qualifier against Romania. Cue widespread criticism in the French media and, given Domenech's capacity for bearing grudges, it was no surprise when Benzema was left out of the France squad for the finals in South Africa the following year.

But with Domenech long gone, Benzema's national team stock is once more on the rise. Current France coach Laurent Blanc has offered him a new start and the signs are that the 23-year-old striker is all set to make the most of the opportunity. For both club and country, "Operation Reconquest" is in full swing. **WS**

Character building...Benzema has worked hard to win over Mourinho

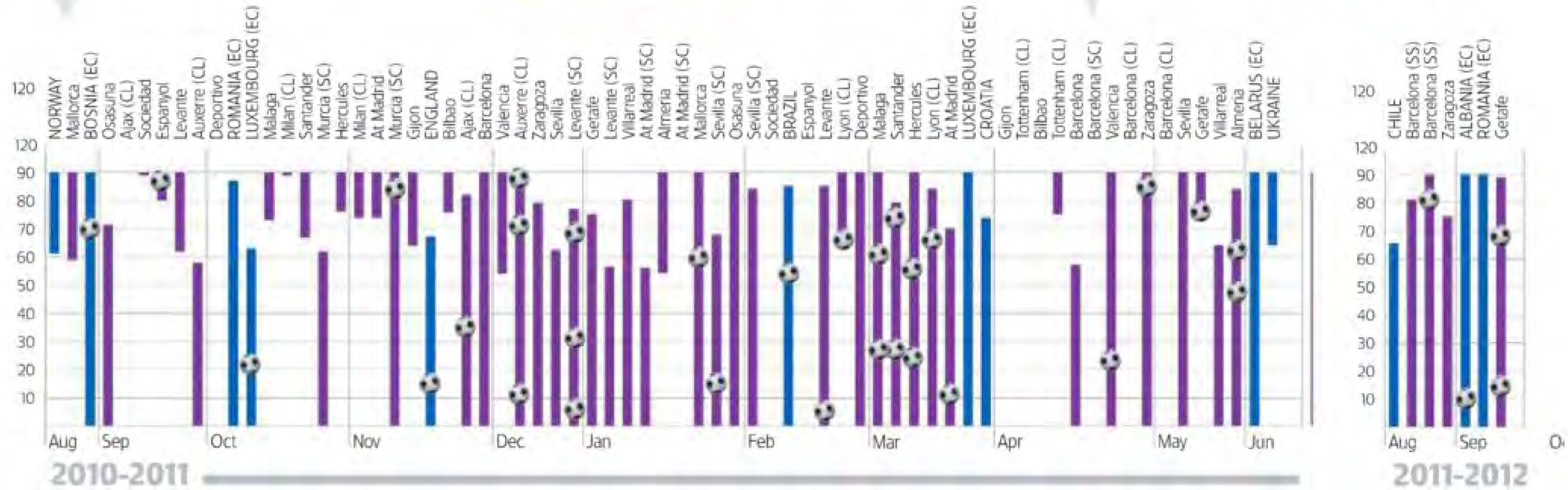
With Domenech gone, Benzema's national team stock is once more on the rise under new coach Blanc

Fresh start...with France coach Blanc

KEY Lyon · Real Madrid · France

Aug 11, 2010 – recalled to the national team by new coach Laurent Blanc, after being left out of Domenech's World Cup squad, he plays the last 30 minutes as France lose 2-1 to Norway in Oslo.

Apr 20, 2011 – despite being left out of the Final, Benzema joined the celebrations with team-mates on the streets of Madrid following the 1-0 Spanish Cup win against rivals Barcelona.



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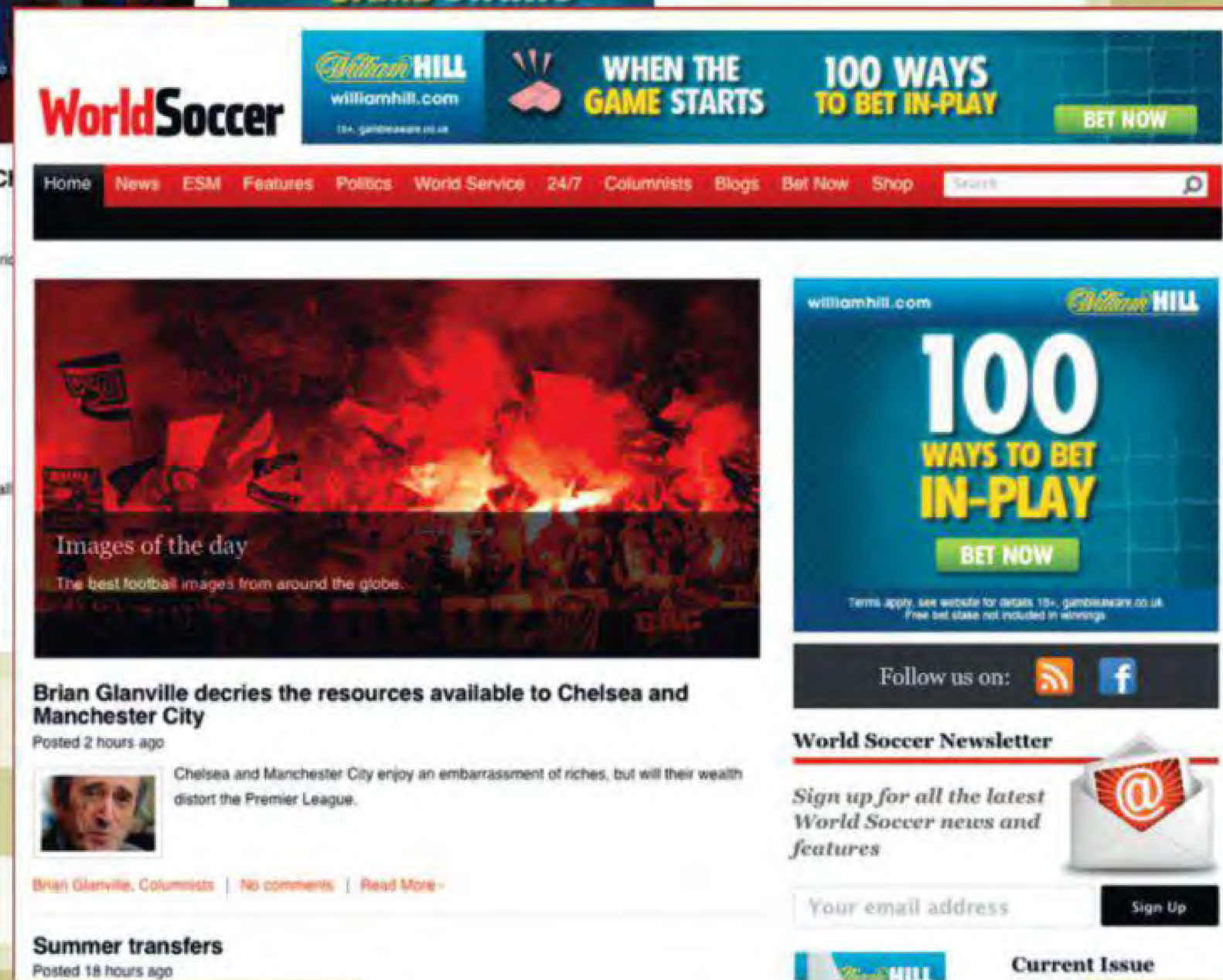

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Two's a crowd

Jonathan Wilson explains why playing two central strikers is outdated and out of fashion

A team plays two games in four days. It uses the same formation in both matches and draws both 0-0. The first is dismissed as a lumpen disappointment, the second hailed as a heroic – if fortunate – point.

The team shape goes from being outmoded and dull to solid and dependable. Context in football is everything, but the Republic of Ireland's European Championship qualifiers against Slovakia and Russia demonstrate the changing role of 4-4-2.

It has become the horror-movie villain of formations, repeatedly written off only to thrust its hand through the soil and grab the heroine's ankle just when it seemed safely dead and buried.

Five days before Ireland's qualifier against Slovakia, Manchester City had hammered Tottenham Hotspur 5-1 at White Hart Lane in a game that seemed to emphasise just how moribund 4-4-2 had become.

Spurs tend to play a 4-4-1-1 these days, a halfway-house formation whose characteristics are largely determined by the player who operates between the midfield and the central striker. When Wayne Rooney was deployed there for Manchester United, his energy and willingness to drop deep meant that he often seemed to be playing as an advanced ball-winner, effectively giving United an extra half-man in midfield. Rafael Van der Vaart, though, is a far less tenacious, far more static presence, and so Spurs were stuck with just the two central midfielders.

When a central midfield two meets a central three the pattern is predictable. The three tends to dominate possession in the central third of the pitch but, if the two can win sufficient ball and transfer it rapidly to the wide midfielders, it can still be dangerous. Spurs benefited from that in Milan last season when Wilson Palacios and Sandro had sufficient verve to live with the pedestrian trio of Mathieu Flamini, Thiago Silva and Gennaro Gattuso, allowing Gareth Bale and Aaron Lennon to rampage on the flanks.

Against City, though, perhaps in part because injuries meant Harry Redknapp

TOTTENHAM ● 1 v 5 ● MAN CITY
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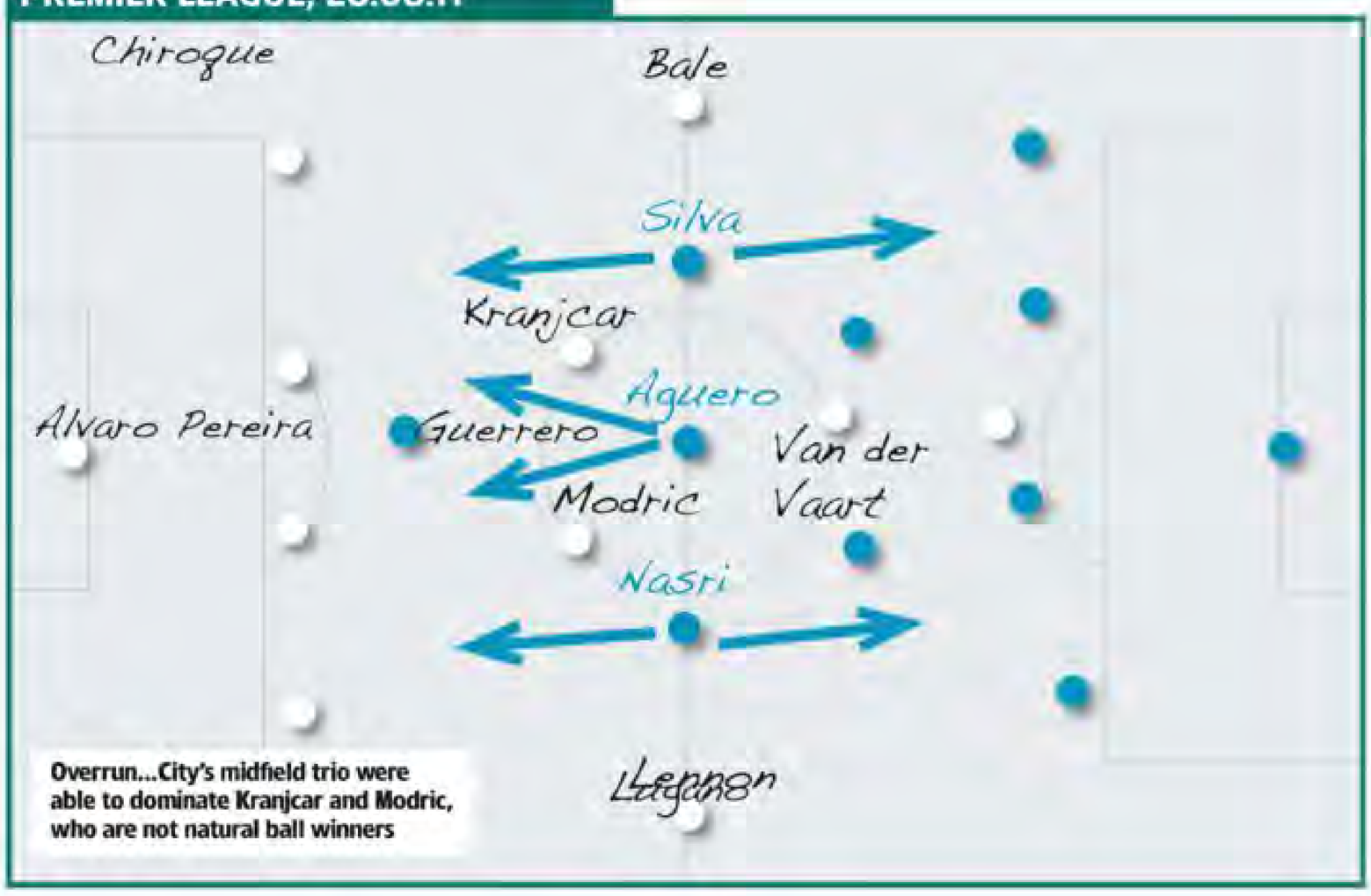

Overrun...City's midfield trio were able to dominate Kranjcar and Modric, who are not natural ball winners

Overwhelmed ...Kranjcar

> With Kranjcar and Modric in tandem, Spurs never had sufficient control

was forced to field Luka Modric and Niko Kranjcar, neither of them natural ball winners, in tandem in the centre, Tottenham never had sufficient control of the ball. City's 4-2-3-1, with a highly fluent three, overwhelmed Spurs in the middle. While Spurs did look dangerous when the ball was worked wide to Lennon or Bale, that happened only fleetingly and after Peter Crouch had missed two fine opportunities, City crushed Spurs with a relentless inevitability, their football vibrant and their midfield domination irresistible.

The obvious conclusion was that, all else being equal, a good midfield three will always overcome a good midfield two.

The problems 4-4-2 has in creating against well-organised opposition were apparent again the following Friday as the Republic of Ireland struggled to break down a defensive Slovakia. On one flank Damien Duff and Miroslav Stoch cancelled each other out, on the other Aiden McGeady and Vladimir Weiss spent the game fruitlessly chasing each other.

With Ireland overmanned three to two in the centre of midfield thanks to Marek Hamsik's deep-lying role, there was rarely any chance of finding a foothold there and no sparkling individual capable of producing a chance from nothing with a moment of individual brilliance. By the second half the game was in a torpor, with one side intent on holding out for a 0-0, the other lacking the wherewithal to stop them.

The Slovakia game was Giovanni Trapattoni's 36th as Ireland coach. In only three of them has he strayed from the 4-4-2 template, so it was little surprise when he retained it for the game away to Russia. This time, though, the mindset was very different. Ireland – having been outplayed by Russia in

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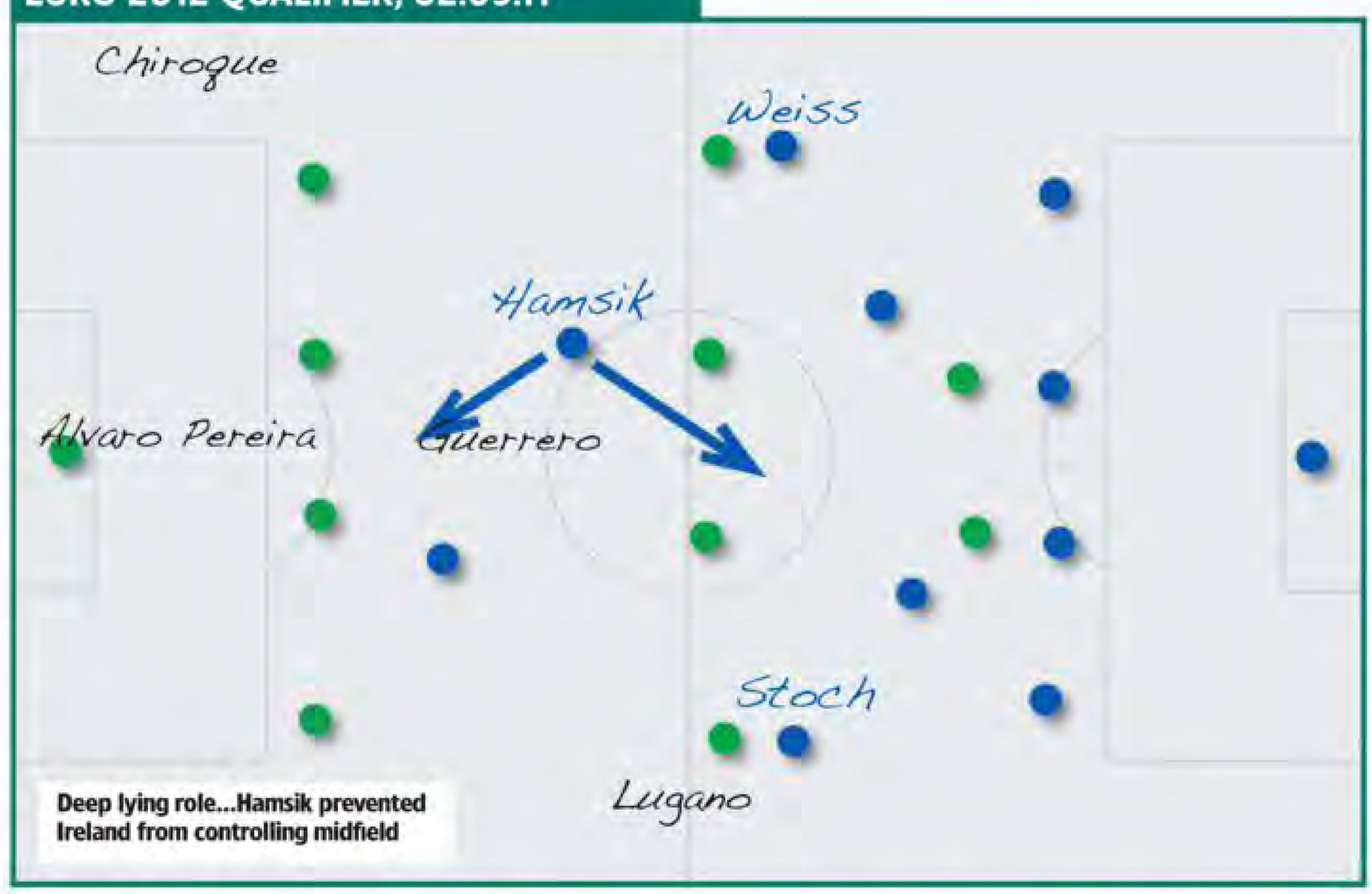


Deep lying role...Hamsik prevented Ireland from controlling midfield

the ball forward quickly and hoping one or other forward can manufacture a shot or, failing that, win a throw-in or a free-kick.

There's nothing new in that. Robbie Fowler and Michael Owen, for instance, never seemed comfortable playing together for Liverpool, but in February 2001 they played their part in an excellent 2-0 win away to Roma, menacing enough to prevent the home side mounting an all-out assault and lethal enough that Owen scored twice when chances did occur in the second half. It was not particularly pleasing on the eye, but it was effective for a side expecting to be under pressure.

When 4-4-2 first emerged in the 1960s its principal aim was to bolster the midfield with an extra man. Now, the retreat of another forward has left that facet outmoded. The paradox is that, at least in Trapattoni's model, playing two central strikers has become a more negative style of football than using only one. **WS**

Dublin, at least until an improbable late fightback reduced the deficit from 3-0 to 3-2 – were in Moscow to survive. The lack of flair in the 4-4-2 ceased to be a problem, and instead the advantages of its stability were emphasised.

Ireland were lucky, of course. Shay Given made a number of excellent saves and Yuri Zhirkov hit a post, while Richard Dunne made a preposterous clearance off the line from Igor Semshov and went on to produce a memorable performance at centre-back, ending the game with staples in his face and his number felt-tipped onto a fresh shirt after cutting himself on a grating as he clattered off the pitch in making yet another brave challenge.

Memorable...Dunne

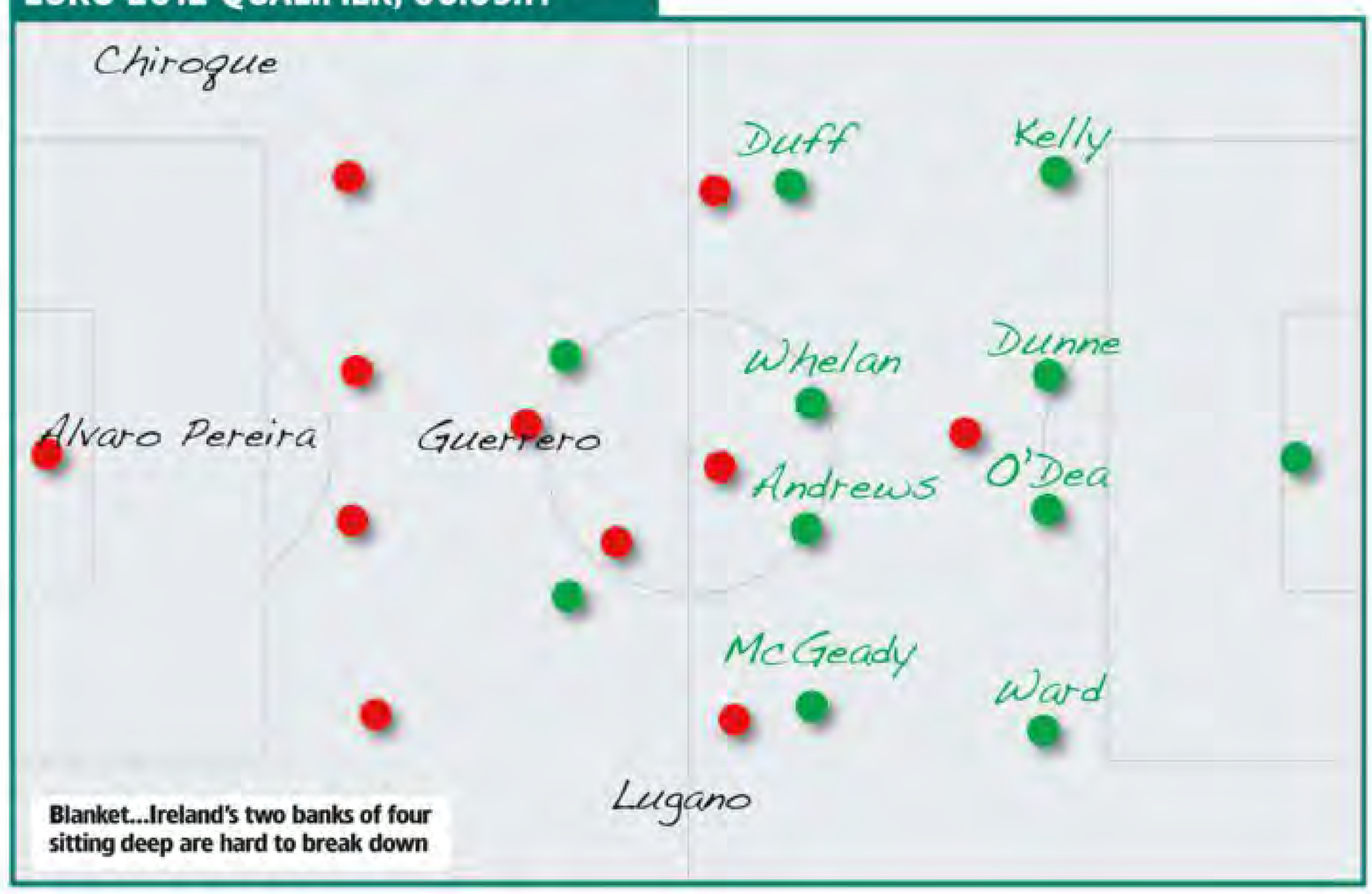
Richard Dunne made a preposterous clearance off the line and ended the game with staples in his face after cutting himself, but Ireland's tactical base meant their luck could be capitalised on

Tactical base

The solidity of Ireland's tactical base meant their luck could be capitalised upon. The Spanish coach Juanma Lillo, a mentor of Pep Guardiola, railed in an interview about what he calls "prophets of the past", those who interpret events backwards from their outcomes. He's right: a winning coach has not always got his tactics right, and a losing coach has not always got them wrong. What matters is whether a coach has shifted the percentages as far as possible in his team's favour. Had Ireland conceded, it wouldn't have invalidated Trapattoni's thinking; he set his team out in the best possible way to frustrate Russia.

Two banks of four sitting deep is very hard to break down. Leaving two men forward becomes a percentage option because it essentially means a side doesn't have to worry too much about creating. The other eight outfielders can focus on defending and then getting

RUSSIA 0 v 0 REP OF IRELAND
EURO 2012 QUALIFIER, 06.09.11



Blanket...Ireland's two banks of four sitting deep are hard to break down

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ClubFocus

MALAGA

The kings of the south

Sid Lowe reports from Andalucia on a long-term plan to challenge Barcelona and Real Madrid

When Abdullah Al Thani bought Malaga in late 2009, the talk was of a third big team in Spain, a power based in the south that could compete with Barcelona in the north and Real Madrid in the centre.

The Qatari sheikh, who is vice-president of the bank of Doha and owner of a portfolio of companies operating in 30 countries, spent more than £9million buying 97 per cent of the shares from Fernando Sanz, assumed the club's £12m debt and committed money to the redevelopment of the Rosaleda stadium. In total, £31m was immediately invested in the club with more promised in the future.

From the third-smallest budget in the division, a club that had never won anything and had been relegated more times than anyone else was now projected as something completely different. With Al Thani's wealth they were to be a contender.

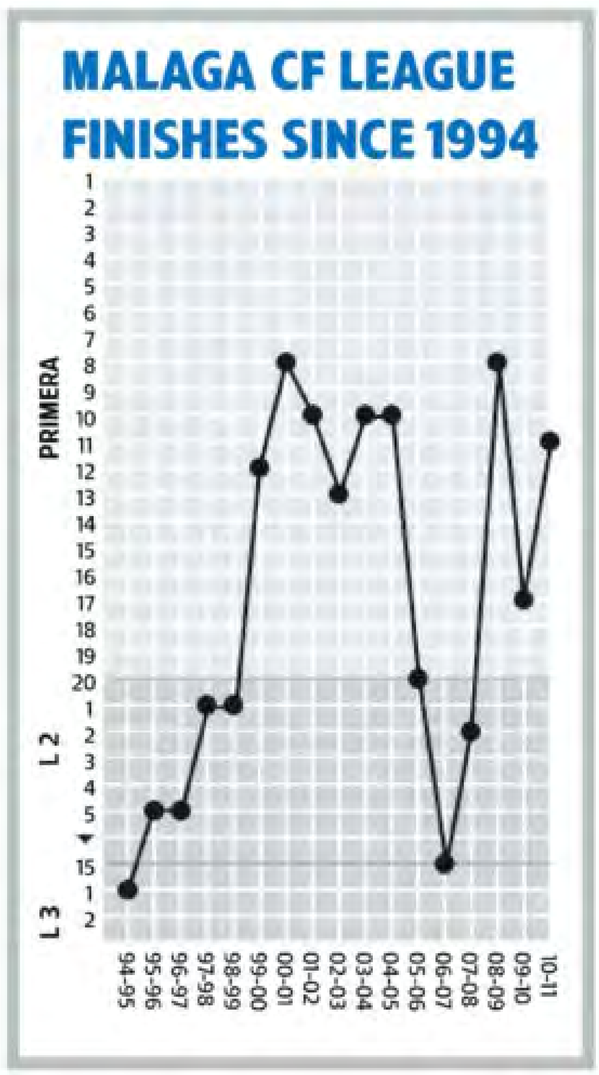
In the summer of 2010 Jesualdo Ferreira was brought in as coach and seven new players joined him. Among them was Sebas Fernandez – the most expensive signing in the club's history.

The club sold 20,000 season tickets, but many were still not convinced. Spain has witnessed its fair share of new owners, and most projects – if they could even be called that – have ended up in rubble, with the "saviours" scurrying away and the fans left to pick up the pieces. There have been too many broken promises.

Low key

There were also those who felt that the new Malaga did not promise much, anyway. Sure, there had been investment, but it was relatively low key at just under £10.5m. At £3m, Fernandez cost more than Malaga had ever paid before but it was less than Madrid or Barcelona ever pay for anyone. Sandro Silva, Edinho and Quincy were not bad players, but they were hardly exciting buys. And although comfort came from Malaga appearing to tread carefully, soon the pessimists seemed to have been proven right.

Nine games into the 2010-11 season Ferreira was sacked. The supporters stuck by them, but Malaga were bottom and heading for a 13th



Record signing...Spain international Santi Cazorla is presented to Malaga's fans

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FloreKaas.com

The "Beast"...Baptista

Ambitious...Joaquin

When it came to overall net spend, no one in Spain paid out more than Malaga this summer

relegation in their history.

A year later and the feeling could hardly be different. Malaga survived on the penultimate weekend of last season and that near miss has given way to huge excitement. This summer, Malaga achieved the unthinkable and wrested attention from the big two. Cesc Fabregas' homecoming apart, the biggest summer presentations were down on the Costa del Sol, where season-ticket sales rose to 26,000 and only stopped there because the capacity of La Rosaleda does not allow for more.

New signing Joaquin marked his presentation by telling a joke about Malaga in the Final of the Champions League. As a symbol of the ambition, it screamed at you. Many a true word is said in jest. This summer, Malaga spent a massive £50m. To put that in context, that's more than Madrid spent, beaten only by Barcelona and Atletico Madrid, and when it came to net spend, no one in Spain paid out more than Malaga.

No wonder people were getting excited. Suddenly Spain had their very own Manchester City or Paris Saint-Germain – a superpower from nowhere.

Only they didn't, because Malaga's project is different. And it is precisely the fact that it is different that brings hope that they could become a credible alternative; that maybe a southern powerbase is no longer a pipe dream.

Look at the list of players Malaga have signed: Diego Buonanotte, Nacho Monreal, Jeremy Toulalan, Joris Mathijsen, Sergio Sanchez, Joaquin Sanchez, Francisco Roman, ➤

THE POWER CURVE

The men that matter at Malaga

SHEIKH ABDULLAH BIN NASSER AL THANI

The 44-year-old club owner and president is a member of the Qatari royal family and has vast business assets that comfortably make him a billionaire.

ANTONIO FERNANDEZ

Joined Malaga as sporting director this summer after enjoying considerable success at Sevilla, where he identified, bought and then sold on talent. Has a crucial role in the long-term transfer strategy.

MANUEL PELLEGRINI

Chilean coach, formerly with Villarreal and Real Madrid, who avoided relegation last term but has had a tough start to the new campaign.

FERNANDO HIERRO

General manager who arrived this summer after stepping down as the Spanish federation's technical director.

ABDULLAH GHUBN

The Jordanian businessman who, as vice-president and CEO, runs the club on behalf of owner Al Thani.

JOSE CARLOS PEREZ

Consultative executive officer and director who has played a key role in negotiating transfers.

Discarded by Real Madrid despite setting a new club record for the most points in a seson, the Chilean joined Malaga last November

"I'm not interested in easy glory"

MANUEL PELLEGRINI, MALAGA COACH

What was it that brought you to Malaga?
The key was the intention that the directors had to build a great Malaga and the credibility of the way the club wanted to go about it. When I spoke to them they explained the plans, which involved not just buying players for the first team but to develop the whole structure of the club.

But Malaga were bottom. You must have had doubts?
No, because I have always been attracted by big challenges. I'm not interested in external ego but internal satisfaction. I'm not interested just in easy glory but in constructing something. It was a risk, sure, but it was a risk I was prepared to take and it was an attractive project. No one guarantees that you are going to succeed. At times, football can be tiring and the pressure can take its toll. It is true you cannot control all the factors that decide if results go your way, but you accept that.

What is your role at the club? Are you limited to coaching the first team?
No. I have been able to intervene in various areas of the club, such as the development of the new training ground, the construction of the squad. Together we are trying to build a project that is not just short term, but for four years and beyond that. Not just with Antonio Fernandez, but with Abdullah Ghubn and Jose Carlos Perez. I have a voice. With Antonio Fernandez, the names I suggest are the first ones we go for – we have a good relationship.

It is striking that there has been stability at critical moments. You stayed at the club even when it looked like there was a genuine risk of relegation last season...
The club is very clear that this is not just a six-month project or a one-year project. When I was at Villarreal I was fortunate that we were able to build stability and then work with it for five years. When there were difficult moments the stability helped. In that sense, this is similar. When we were struggling, I told them that if they were not completely sure about me, if they didn't have confidence in me, that we could end the contract. I would not want any more money. But they had faith in me and that faith helps consolidate the project. We extended my contract when there might have been doubts around my future. I think this club has a solid base and that it can, not immediately, but in a prudent amount of time, become one of Spain's big teams.

> "I have always been attracted by big challenges. I'm not interested in ego"

Villarreal appeared to be pressure free compared to what you had to endure at Real Madrid. How does that compare to here?
Villarreal, Malaga, Madrid...there's pressure everywhere. The internal pressure that you impose upon yourself is much greater than the external pressure. I never took a decision based upon what was being said from the outside. When the results are bad, I can assure you that the pressure is the same at every club in the world.

What about the expectations? Realistically, what are they?
Medium and long-term, I have no doubt that this will be one of the big clubs in Spain, consistently playing in European competitions. That is the objective. It's not an objective for this year – although I am hopeful – but one for us to grow towards. Objectives have to be longer term: the development of the team and the club. If when I had arrived at Villarreal I had said we would get to the semi-final of the Champions League or finish second in the league, they would have said we were mad. It's similar here. We cannot create false expectations but nor can we have no expectations.

Is competing with Real Madrid and Barcelona possible?
People hope so and I am not going to take that hope from them.

But, surely, you must put the brakes on?
Well, you have to be clear about the reality. There are two clubs that are a long, long way above the rest, Then there are five clubs: Sevilla, Villarreal, Valencia, Atletico and Athletic. They have squads that are as good or better than Malaga's and they have been building them for longer. But that is where we aspire to be.

Despite fighting relegation, does last season show what you can do?
If you look at the last three months, we were a good side. In the final weeks of the season we were the team that picked up the most points. Our aim has to be to continue in a similar way. We will continue to have the same aims: to be attacking, to try to take control of the game, to take responsibility, to be attractive. I have always had that. There are small differences, of course, depending on what players you have, but there is a footballing concept and a concept of spectacle that is non negotiable.

Is there also a human concept? You seem to have been very careful about what kind of players you sign...
That's fundamental, totally fundamental. We wanted players with sufficient maturity, with human qualities as well as footballing ones that can help. Ruud [Van Nistelrooy] is an example for the younger players. And not just because of what he does on the pitch but because of everything about him: the way he looks after himself, the way he behaves as a person. Santi, Demichelis, Baptista, Toulalan, Maresca – they have a winning mentality, they know what the elite is like and they still have the desire to play. They are driven internally, not externally. That is vital. We wanted players with talent but we also wanted people to provide a base for Malaga to grow for many years.

The former Real Madrid and Spain defender was born in Malaga and, having returned this summer, is now an important figurehead

"There's no point in going mad"

FERNANDO HIERRO, GENERAL MANAGER

Despite being from Malaga, this is the first time you have had any formal involvement with the club. What is your role?
For me, this is my home. I am from here, I still have a home here, my brother was a player here – he has been sporting director too – and the club were looking for someone like me. Jose Carlos Perez [the club's CEO] called me and said they needed someone who represents the club and the city. It's my job to help integrate the club and its owners into Spanish football, to help them understand it and to help them make themselves understood. The owners have great ideas and I have to help ease their passage at the LFP [the league], the RFEF [Spanish football federation], with other clubs. Why? Because they want to do things the right way. They haven't just turned up thinking about the now but thinking about the future too.

There seems to be a real concern to be liked. Malaga have supported other local clubs and signed a sponsorship deal with UNESCO. Is that a counter-balance to the classic accusations levelled at foreign owners and their money?
We want this to be a *simpatico* club. And if people come into Spanish football willing to invest money, they're very welcome. The Sheikh has a project and has been very straight right from the start. It's important that people don't think it is just about the money. If you look at the players we have signed, they were all signed for rational prices; there has been no madness.

How would you describe the project at Malaga?
Sensible. We have a magnificent coach and a magnificent sporting director. The coach has a four-year contract and his position is consolidated. He was not sacked when things were going badly last year because there is total faith in him. His position was reinforced by survival and the way that the team played in the final few weeks. The project is well thought out and the prices paid for players reasonable. There is a good mixture in the squad: players from the youth system who were born here and raised here and have hope and have to give the club heart, players of 24, 25, 26 looking to grow with the club, and experienced players who still have a fantastic commitment to the project: Ruud, Baptista, Demichelis, Maresca, Toulalan. They are players who have to be committed and are an example to the rest. It's vital to have players who are committed and believe in the project, people who are happy. The aim is to grow bit by bit, to get as high as we can.

And how high is that?
We don't know. What we do know is that we have a magnificent coach, a magnificent squad, the hope and enthusiasm of a city. This is the fifth biggest city in Spain and there is a greater area around it. Malaga does have potential to make this a great project.

So why has it never happened before?
Because it's not that easy to find people who have the financial muscle to be able to put a project like this in place. That is a reality. You have to keep in mind that Sheikh Al Thani came to a club that was virtually bankrupt, that had gone into administration, that had been in that process of administration for almost four years. Now there are 28,300 seats at the Rosaleda of which 26,000 will be taken by season-ticket holders. The stadium will be redeveloped and expanded. We can see that in order to consolidate the project we need a social base and this city, this club, has that. We need a new training ground, facilities of the highest level, and we're building that. We have to consolidate the youth system as well as the first team. We have got those projects under way. There is a plan for the future at all levels.

> "The players we have signed have been for rational prices. There has been no madness"

All that will mean massive expectations. How do you live with the pressure?
More pressure than last year, when we were fighting not to be relegated? I don't think that's possible. And when you look back on that, at the critical moment, Malaga stayed calm, true to itself. That makes the project strong; the union between the club, the coach and the sporting director during those difficult days helped to consolidate the project and strengthen the club. There was support from the fans too. All of that helps to show that this is a resistant project, one that can last. Unity brings strength.

Can you really compete with Madrid and Barcelona?
Today, there's no chance. We have to be realistic. Over the last two years they have been 25 or 30 points ahead of the rest. That's the reality. But behind them there is a group of teams that Malaga can aspire to get into. It's very hard to see anyone from that group fighting for the first or second slot in the table, but the chasing pack has the hope of being able to cut that gap, getting closer. It can't be 25 or 30 points any more.

Malaga seem to have suddenly become everyone's second favourite team; Spain's hope of finally challenging the traditional big two...
I think there are some teams that are "resting". They are thinking: "Ah, Malaga, they can try to cut the gap this year". But we also have to be realistic when it comes to competing with them – we are a relatively new project that hasn't been in place for long. We know what happened last year, we know where we have come from and we will look to the future. We're moving slowly; there's no point in going mad. It's great that the fans are dreaming and I would never take those dreams from them, but as directors of the club we cannot sell an illusion. What we can say is that we have a great squad, a great coach, and that we're ready.

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X-Factor...Spanish talent show winner Maria Villalon welcomes the new signing

Football car-azy...their is plenty of local support for the club

Champions...Malaga give Barcelona a guard of honour at the end of last season

◄ Isco, Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Santi Cazorla. Last winter they were preceded by Julio Baptista, Enzo Maresca, Martin Demichelis and Nacho Camacho. Among those players are a European champion, a World Cup finalist, a Champions League top scorer, internationals from France, Holland, Brazil, Spain and Belgium, plus one of the most promising kids – Isco – coming through the ranks for Spain.

All together, they make for a hugely impressive team, but they are not superstars. At £19.5m, Cazorla is their most expensive signing – arguably, the country's best player beyond Madrid and Barcelona – but he is no flash, unneeded accessory. These are not marquee signings, and though Malaga's financial muscle has made their purchase possible – they have even paid cash up front for all of their new players, which is virtually unheard of in modern football – nor has the outlay been absurd.

"There's a trend of clubs being taken over and spending crazy amounts but this is different," says Van Nistelrooy.

"There has been a lot of money spent but Malaga are building in a very serious way. This project comes with care and vision."

Sporting director Antonio Fernandez adds: "We have paid market rates, not Sheikh rates. We paid [£19.5m] for Santi, not the [£26m] they wanted. We paid almost half as much as we were asked for Toulalan.

"We wanted to do this right. We have changed almost the entire anatomy of the team. Six months ago, this project didn't even exist, now it is a reality."

Faith...Van Nistelrooy says the Malaga project comes with "care and vision"

The reality is a squad that has balance. There are two players for every position, all of them with clearly defined roles, chosen because they fit the model being put into place by the sporting directorate and the coach, and because they play the way Malaga want to play. In terms of ages, there are short, medium and long-term projects running side by side. And next summer, they will take another step again.

Investment in youth

While older players like Van Nistelrooy are expected to have an immediate impact, younger players have been signed too and there has been an important investment in youth. Juanmi, Recio and Portillo are already in the first-team squad and the expectation is that they will soon be joined by other home-grown players.

Malaga have also sought to build not just a collection of players but to create a system that works. The country's fifth-biggest city should be sufficient to make the project sustainable. A new training ground is being constructed and the stadium is being redeveloped, while life on the Costa del Sol is an attractive proposition for anyone, enhancing their potential to attract the right players.

Van Nistelrooy has praised the structure and organisation of the club. That contributes to the day-to-day experience and so, above all, do the players. Sporting director Antonio Fernandez also stresses Malaga's decision to twice say no when coach Manuel Pellegrini offered to resign if it would help drag the team out of trouble.

"We believe in him and that decision gave us greater stability and him real authority," says Fernandez. "I am sure that if we had sacked him, we would have gone down." The contrast to Pellegrini's time at Madrid could hardly be more different.

The return of Julio Baptista from injury at the end of last season coincided with Malaga winning seven of their last 10 games before an irrelevant final-day defeat, by which time they were safe from relegation. Slowly but surely they had constructed an impressive side; now they have to integrate the new players and continue to move forward.

Van Nistelrooy says: "There are no prima donnas – just serious pros who want to achieve something." And Antonio Fernandez agrees, adding: "It is vital that we sign good people as well as good players. When I signed Dani Alves for Sevilla at the age of 18, for instance, I spoke to his people and to his coaches, I tried to meet people from his neighbourhood. They tell you things that are important. I ate with him a couple of times too, and looking him in the eyes you can see a lot."

Getting the right people means persuading them about the project, not just throwing money at them, as a project built purely on cash attracts the wrong footballers. Persuading them that Malaga can actually contribute to their career, not just their bank balances, is vital to sign the right players. And how better than to point at the men running the footballing side of the club? Getting

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the right players in means getting the right people in – and Malaga appear to have done so, off the pitch even more than on it.

Look at the men in charge; men who are a world away from the brash image of the arriviste football club with bags of cash: quiet, understated, hugely respected. Not just Fernando Hierro, but Pellegrini and Antonio Fernandez: men who have achieved exactly what it is Malaga aspire to and compete with Madrid and Barcelona.

Pellegrini took Villarreal – Cazorla included – to second place in La Liga and the Champions League semi-final. Antonio Fernandez was at Sevilla when they took their challenge for the league title to the final day of the season and won five trophies in 13 months. He it was who discovered not only Dani Alves but also Julio Baptista, signing the pair for a total of £4.3m in a deal which made the club a profit of more than £50m.

Fernandez turned again to Baptista at Malaga, revealing: "I was sitting with him in Rome and I said: 'You have to come and join me at Malaga.' He looked at me as if to say: 'Yeah, right – have another drink mate.'

"It was hard to convince him – not because of the money, but because of who we are and what the situation was. It was about making a player like him, who had three or four offers from the Premier League, want to come here. I was lucky that I had worked with him before. That gave him faith.

"I said to him: 'Julio, if you come, you'll see how next summer we sign certain players.'"

Baptista the bait

Without Baptista they would not have succeeded in getting those players – and not just because his goals helped Malaga survive. It was because, insists Fernandez, Baptista represented the kind of player that the club wanted to sign. He was the bait for others.

Van Nistelrooy, who had first been contacted in February, admits that the signing of Baptista helped to convince him that it was worth joining Malaga, while Fernandez notes that the decision to sign Van Nistelrooy first this summer was not coincidental: it was a hook with which to encourage in other players.

"I was hoping to persuade him and then, via him, convince the rest," explains Fernandez. "Ruud is not just a great player, but someone who represents seriousness: a way of doing things. Our way of doing things."

And then Antonio Fernandez says something that sums it up: "You don't just point at a player and say: 'I like him, I'm signing him.'"

Malaga haven't. And they are all the better for it. WS

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

Willy CABALLERO (Arg)
Age 30 (28.09.81)
Signed midway through last season when on-loan goalkeeper Sergio Asenjo picked up a serious knee injury. Became an instant fans' favourite with some exceptional performances during the run-in.

RUBEN Martinez
Age 27 (22.06.84)
Former Barcelona reserve who was capped by Spain at under-20, under-21 and under-23 levels. Signed from Cartagena in August 2010.

DEFENDERS

Martin DEMICHELIS (Arg)
Age 30 (20.12.80)
Veteran centre-back who arrived in the winter transfer window from Bayern Munich. Not quick, but hugely experienced.

ELISEU (Por)
Age 27 (01.10.83)
Lightening fast left-winger who has been converted into a left-back by Pellegrini. Monreal's arrival suggests he will be used more as a substitute this season.

Jesus GAMEZ
Age 26 (10.04.85)
Powerful home-grown right-back who can attack as well as defend.

MIDFIELDERS

APONO
Age 27 (13.02.84)
Talented and tough Malaga-born central midfielder who began his career in the second division with San Pedro before joining Marbella. Joined Malaga in the second tier and helped them to promotion.

Nacho CAMACHO
Age 21 (04.05.90)
Defensive midfielder signed form Atletico Madrid for £1.3m in the winter window. Likely to play a more limited role this season.

Santi CAZORLA
Age 26 (13.12.84)
The club's record signing, at £19.5m from Villarreal in July. Playmaker who was a member of Spain's Euro 2008-winning side, but he missed the 2010 World Cup through injury.

Plus: (27) Francisco **PORTILLO** (Age 21, 13.06.90); (28) **RECIO** (Age 20, 11.01.91)

FORWARDS

Julio BAPTISTA (Bra)
Age 29 (01.10.81)
"The Beast" scored nine goals in 11 games after joining Malaga from Roma for £2.6m last term. Playing off the main striker, he is back to the form that saw him score 47 goals in two seasons at Sevilla.

Diego BUONANOTTE (Arg)
Age 23 (19.04.88)
Signed form River Plate for £4m last winter, although he did not actually join until this summer. Can play anywhere across the front line.

Sebas FERNANDEZ (Uru)
Age 26 (23.05.85)
A clever finisher who will have a role to play this season, although mostly off the bench. Signed from Banfield of Argentina for £3m.

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THE KIT

Home kit

Second kit

THE COACH

Manuel PELLEGRINI (Chl)

Age 58 (16.09.53)
Spent his entire playing career as a centre-back with Universidad de Chile, winning one cap for his country. Given his first coaching job by the club and later worked in Equador and Argentina before moving to Spain and joining Villarreal in 2004. After five successful years he took over at Real Madrid, but was sacked after one season. Joined Malaga in November 2010.

Joris MATHIJSEN (Hol)

Age 31 (05.04.80)
Current first choice for his country, with more than 70 caps. A summer signing from Hamburg.

Nacho MONREAL

Age 25 (26.02.86)
Signed from Osasuna for £5m. Neat and tidy in possession, he has made two appearances for Spain and is tipped to become the regular left-back.

Sergio SANCHEZ

Age 25 (03.04.86)
Strong, versatile defender who began his career with Espanyol. A useful squad player who was signed from Sevilla for £2.4m.

Kris STADSGAARD (Den)

Age 26 (01.08.85)
Central defender who won two Norwegian league titles with Rosenborg before joining Malaga in August last year. He is the son of former referee Knud Stadsgaard.

WELIGTON (Bra)

Age 32 (26.08.79)
Aggressive, quick, no-thrills central defender who was part of the Malaga side that won promotion in 2008.

DUDA (Por)

Age 31 (27.06.80)
Not quick, and rarely beats his man, but delivers wonderfully accurate left-footed free-kicks and crosses from the flank. Also scores his fair share of goals.

ISCO

Age 19 (21.04.92)
While £6m is a lot of money for a player who played just four top-flight games for Valencia, there are high hopes for the Spain under-20 international who likes to play as a creative force behind the striker.

JOAQUIN

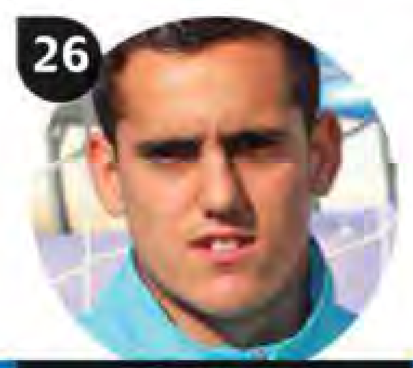
Age 30 (21.07.81)
An old-fashioned winger, full of pace and tricks, and an excellent crosser of the ball. Signed for £3.5m in the summer after rediscovering the sort of form that saw Valencia pay Real Betis £21.5m for him in 2006.

Enzo MARESCA (Ita)

Age 31 (10.02.80)
Technically impressive and tactically very astute, a dressing-room heavyweight who is liked and respected by team-mates. Signed in the winter from Olympiakos.

Jeremy TOULALAN (Fra)

Age 28 (10.09.83)
The club's record signing, at £9m from Lyon, until the arrival of Cazorla. Maintains possession superbly.



JUANMI

Age 18 (20.05.93)
Became the youngest player to appear for Malaga when making his debut at 16 in January 2010. Capped by Spain at under-16, under-17, and under-19 levels.

Jose RONDON (Ven)

Age 22 (16.09.89)
The one survivor from Malaga's first crop of new signings who is likely to play a key role this season and beyond. Signed from second-tier Las Palmas for £3m in the summer of 2010-11 and scored 14 goals last season. Quick, powerful and good in the air.

Ruud VAN NISTELROOY (Hol)

Age 35 (01.07.76)
Still in great shape, he has been top scorer in the English, Dutch and Spanish leagues, as well as the Champions league. Malaga consciously chose to sign him first this summer in order to win over other players.

THE STADIUM

LA ROSALEDA (capacity 29,000)
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Facetoface

MICHEL PLATINI

"Professional football is going pear-shaped"

Tipped as a possible future president of FIFA, Michel Platini has enough on his plate at the moment as leader of the European federation UEFA

How do you see the state of football in these days of global financial upheaval – and not only in sport?

My message for football is alarmist: red lights are flashing, we cannot live with billions of euros of deficits without paying the consequences one day or another. We ignore the problems at our peril. You can see it with players not being paid, transfer fees not being paid. I'm afraid for our game when I see some things going so badly. We need some very serious reflection. I'm not saying I'm afraid for the future of football itself: football will always be played in the schoolyard, in the street. Football also has so many good qualities and values that it's important for us to send out a message of hope and say positive things from time to time. What I am worried about is the future of professional football. It's going pear-shaped with all these problems such as match fixing, corruption, violence, racism, hooliganism and debts.

Is the game ready for Financial Fairplay?

There is no alternative. Clubs have to live within their means because we are facing huge problems. At the moment Financial Fairplay will affect only clubs involved in UEFA's European competitions but, sooner or later, we'll have to address the situation within national competitions, because some leagues are not in control of their domestic financial situation. With Financial Fairplay we are trying to protect the clubs, not punish them. We established the rules, took a vote and everyone agreed – so everyone should now respect those rules. I want to send a very clear message that we will not be pressed to take a step back on this. Anyone who does not respect the rules will be sanctioned because we have all agreed to that as well. Expulsion from European competitions would be the ultimate sanction. It's strange: the fans of clubs who don't have money want Financial Fairplay; fans who support clubs owned by Qataris don't want it.

How do you view the crisis within FIFA?

FIFA has had a difficult year. Election years are always difficult for institutions and it was particularly tiring for me since lots of people were putting pressure on me to stand. Mohamed Bin Hammam actually asked me to stand against [Sepp] Blatter. The difficulty for Blatter is that the members of the executive committee are not chosen by him and if there is anyone who is corrupted, this is an issue for the people and associations who choose them. If anyone has been corrupted then it has not been because of Blatter. All the big attacks on FIFA are mainly on other people, not on him. I know he is not an angel. He is a typical politician. But he will want to leave a good memory of his time as president. So he has to make changes and we will support him. He has volunteered to produce a revolution. If he cleans up FIFA then he will be remembered positively.

Barcelona against Real Madrid and Jose Mourinho's behaviour in the Spanish Super Cup wasn't such a good advertisement for the game, was it?

I am a player at heart, not a politician. I can only remind players, referees and coaches they have a very important role to play. It's a shame when we have the wonderful spectacle I saw in the match between Real Madrid and Barcelona yet we end up talking about not the wonderful 89 minutes but what happened in the one minute which came right at the end. The players from Barcelona and Real Madrid should know it's very important we give a positive message about football. As for Mourinho, everyone makes mistakes so he had to be punished by the Spanish national association. My view is a personal one, a philosophical one, if you like: someone who is a great coach is a role model and should set an example, not only to the fans but also to all the other coaches. They have to be clean and behave beautifully. Because what about the other millions of coaches? What are they thinking: that everything is permitted because he does something like this?

What about Arsene Wenger's suspension for relaying messages to his Arsenal team when he was suspended from the bench?

I have to support my disciplinary committee but I am not in love with this regulation. You can't ban a coach effectively from a stadium because with modern communication he can do what he wants. He can sit at home in front of his television and send an SMS to the bench. There is a lot of confusion. We will discuss this with the elite coaches and perhaps bring in a new regulation from 2012.

Are you still concerned about foreign investors buying clubs?

Yes because I don't know where this system will lead us. I am old fashioned about these things. If people from outside want to put money into football that's fine but my worry is what will happen when they change their mind and take their money away? Their clubs will disappear. I am a big fan of Real Madrid or Barcelona where the socios [members] are the voice of the club. I like the fact the clubs belong to the fans. These are the people who protect a club's local identity. The president may be foreign, the players may be foreign, the coach may be foreign and they all come and go but the fans stay. This sense of identity is one of the things which has made football so popular.

● The full transcript of this interview is available online at www.worldsoccer.com

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ON LIONEL MESSI...

"Messi is a diamond. But every generation believes it has the best hero. Pele was considered the best in the 1950s and 1960s; Johan Cruyff was supposed to be the best in the 1970s; Zinedine Zidane in the 2000s"

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Talentscout

DEDE

COUNTRY	Brazil
CLUB	Vasco da Gama
POSITION	Centre-back
AGE	23 (01.07.88)
PREVIOUS CLUB	Volta Redonda
HONOURS	2011 Brazilian Cup

Vasco da Gama coach Ricardo Gomes – who is currently recovering from a stroke – was a fine centre-back in his playing days and even captained his country. So when he says that Vasco defender Anderson Vital da Silva, better known as Dede, has the potential to be even better than he was, it is a comment worth listening to.

The rise of the 6ft 4in central defender demonstrates just how fine the line can be between success and failure. Dede joined Vasco in 2009 after impressing with his home-town club, Volta Redonda, in the Rio state championship, but initially found first-team opportunities hard to come by. Volta Redonda translates as "round trip" and last year, with his contract at Vasco coming to an end, it looked as though he was going to get a return ticket back to his first club, or maybe sold to South Korea. "But there was something I was determined upon," Dede recalls. "I wasn't going to leave Vasco by the back door."

A dearth of centre-backs meant he was given a chance in a Brazilian Cup game against Vitoria and, although Vasco were knocked out, he gave a performance of such authority that he instantly became first choice. Since then his form has seldom been anything less than imperious. Quick, strong and assured, he was the rock of the side that won this year's Brazilian Cup and is being called the most outstanding central defender the country has produced since Thiago Silva found his form at Fluminense.

It is a comparison Dede enjoys, saying of the Milan defender: "He's my role model, the best centre-back in the world" – and it may not be long before he lines up alongside his idol in the national side.

Dede was unfortunate not to be taken to this summer's Copa America, and if that was a mistake by coach Mano Menezes it was one he immediately rectified by including the big defender in his squad for subsequent friendlies against Germany and Ghana.

> "I'm always joking and my team-mates say I'm like a big kid. But on the field I'm totally different...I have to impose respect"

Thiago Silva's current partner Lucio is now 33, and Chelsea's David Luiz has lost ground after a disastrous performance against France earlier this year. So if Dede gets the chance to show what he can do at international level – and takes that opportunity as well as he did the one against Vitoria – then he will be firmly in the frame to start should Lucio fall by the wayside before 2014.

Menezes has promised to look at more domestic-based players, which should also work to Dede's advantage. A few years ago he would almost certainly have been sold to Europe by now, with Benfica, who have been following his progress, a likely destination. But Brazil's boom and Portugal's economic bust means that he should still be around next year to pick up important experience in the Libertadores Cup.

Whatever happens, Dede will do it all with a smile on his face. "I'm always joking and my team-mates say I'm like a big kid," he admits. "But on the field I have to impose respect. If I'm joking around with the striker then he'll take me to the cleaners. On the field I'm totally different."

Dealing with the pressure of playing at home in 2014 will be no laughing matter. But if Dede can maintain the progress he has made over the past year, Brazil fans will have an added reason to dream about ending the next World Cup with a big grin.

Tim Vickery

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Joel OBI

COUNTRY	Nigeria
CLUB	Internazionale (Ita)
POSITION	Midfielder
AGE	20 (22.05.91)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	February 2011, v Sierra Leone
CAPS	7 (0 goals)

Nigeria's fans may be notoriously hard to please, but within 20 minutes of his international debut in February Joel Chukwuma Obi had the crowd in Lagos' Teslim Balogun Stadium chanting his name as he set up a goal against Sierra Leone with a delightful cross. He also received a standing ovation when he was substituted with 20 minutes left.

Obi hasn't looked back since, featuring in the starting line-up for all six of his country's subsequent internationals and producing another impressive performance as Nigeria beat a second-string Argentina side 4-1 in Abuja at the start of June.

Although he has played more internationals than he has made starts for his club side since his debut for Internazionale as a late substitute against Werder Bremen in last season's UEFA Champions League, all that could change in the new Serie A campaign if the Italians decide to make the most of his mazy dribbling and incisive passing. Such is his determination to make an impression in this campaign that he turned down the chance to play at the Under-20 World Cup in Colombia this summer to keep himself fresh.

Nigerian supporters already call him the "new Jay-Jay" in reference to the search for a successor to Augustin Okocha, whose role as playmaker in the national side has not been effectively filled since his retirement five years ago.

Last year's African Nations Cup finals in Angola saw John Obi Mikel forced into an attacking midfield role, where his lack of pace was exposed, and Nigeria again sorely lacked creativity at last summer's World Cup in South Africa, where they were forced to compensate with pace down the flanks.

Obi's arrival could end all of those problems and new Nigeria coach Samson Siasia is not alone in his belief that the youngster is a talent to be carefully nurtured.

Mark Gleeson

Dries MERTENS

COUNTRY	Belgium
CLUB	PSV Eindhoven (Hol)
POSITION	Left-winger
AGE	24 (06.05.87)
PREVIOUS CLUBS	Gent, Eendracht Aalst (on loan), AGOVV Apeldoorn (Hol, on loan), Utrecht (Hol)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	February 2010, v Finland
CAPS	4 (0 goals)

While some compare his small, slender frame and delicious ball skills to Wesley Sneijder, others prefer to liken Dries Mertens to fellow Belgian attacker Eden Hazard of Lille. But, whatever the terms of reference, no one should be in any doubt as to the immense potential of PSV Eindhoven's summer signing, who began the new Eredivisie season with seven goals in his first five games.

Not that Mertens fever is a new phenomenon in Holland. In 2009, while at AGOVV Apeldoorn, he was voted the best player in the second division, then a year later, in his first season in the top-flight with Utrecht, he came runner-up to Ajax's Luis Suarez in a poll for the Eredivisie's star turn. With his stock continuing to rise, PSV saw fit to splash £6million on him in the close season.

A school of thought says PSV should not be spending heavily at a time of economic crisis – Eindhoven city council recently agreed to give the club a £43m loan – but the club's determination to bring the young Belgian on board is understandable. Last season he was quite irresistible, scoring 14 goals, providing 24 assists and regularly putting on a one-man display of mesmerising dribbling, free-kick prowess and a predilection for the unexpected, especially his clever backheels.

"Trickery has always been a big part of my game," says Mertens, a native of the central Belgian city of Leuven. "I play according to my instincts. On the pitch I've my own way of doing things. I aim to be as lively as I can and go directly for goal every time I get the ball.

"The size of fee PSV paid for me doesn't add any extra pressure. I'm still the same player. I just concentrate on my football. The fact that PSV have spent so much on me shows I'm on the right lines in my development, that for the past few years I've kept up a good standard of performance."

His high profile today stands in marked contrast to the gloominess which enveloped his career in its early days. Kicked out of the Anderlecht academy at the age of 14 for being too small, he must have wondered if that was it. However, he stuck at it and, after convalescing at Belgian clubs Gent and Eendracht Aalst, he exploded into life in Apeldoorn, where he reigned supreme with the Dutch club for three wonderful seasons.

Despite being revered in Holland, his opportunities with the Belgium national side have been limited so far. That will surely be rectified soon.

Nick Bidwell

SERCAN Yildirim

COUNTRY	Turkey
CLUB	Bursaspor
POSITION	Forward
AGE	21 (05.04.90)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	June 2009, v Azerbaijan
CAPS	11 (2 goals)
HONOURS	2010 Super Lig
LINKED WITH	Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus)

As the launch pad for the career of Hakan Sukur in the early 1990s, Bursaspor do not have to try too hard when making their case as being the cradle of Turkish attacking excellence. But while the future UEFA Cup-winner with Galatasaray was essentially a target man, and a real force in the air, the latest prodigy of the "*Yesil Timsahlar*" (green crocodiles) is quite another front-line species altogether. Quick, mobile and technical, he can play in any number of roles, including lone spearhead, second striker, left-winger or creative midfielder.

Never more dangerous than when running at defences from deep, Sercan's principal asset is his extreme pace – which makes him ideal for counter-attacking strategy employed by Bursaspor coach Ertugrul Saglam, who led the club to the title in 2010 and third place last time out.

With Bursaspor from the age of 15, and a first-team regular for the past three years, Sercan does, however, have one obvious flaw: a tendency for wayward finishing.

Since scoring 11 times in the 2008-09 Turkish league campaign, he has only managed 11 Super Lig goals in total for the past two seasons and somehow he must find a way to be more clinical in the danger zone.

"On occasions he does lack composure near to goal," says former Bursaspor goalkeeper Omer Catkic, who now plays for Antalyaspor. "He has no trouble outpacing opponents or dribbling through one or two defensive lines, but then it gets complicated for him.

> "He has rare gifts"
> Ex team-mate, Omer Catkic

"But I'm sure he'll learn not to be as wasteful. He'll improve this aspect of his game with more experience.

"He's still young and everyone should have faith in his promise. He has rare gifts and, what's more, I see a player determined to succeed."

The big question is how much longer will Sercan remain in the green and white of Bursaspor? He is reportedly keen to try his luck abroad and nearly signed this spring for Lokomotiv Moscow, before the deal fell through. Scouts from the Premier League and Bundesliga are also hovering with intent, although Bursaspor chairman Ibrahim Yazici won't let his prized asset go cheaply, having signed him to a new four-year deal in August.

Nick Bidwell

FIVE TO FOLLOW
MANCHESTER UNITED STARLETS

Larnell COLE
Age 18 (09.03.93)
Position Midfielder

Of slender build but a quietly determined and skilful operator on the right flank. No relation to former Manchester United striker Andrew, he has already been capped by England at under-19 level.

Will KEANE
Age 18 (11.01.93)
Position Forward

Scored a hat-trick against Chelsea in last season's FA Youth Cup semi-final and twice in the Final against Sheffield United. No relation to Roy Keane but has a twin, Michael, who is also on United's books.

Ravel MORRISON
Age 18 (02.02.93)
Position Midfielder

One of the stars of United's FA Youth Cup-winning side last season but troubled by serious off-the-pitch problems linked to a tough upbringing in south Manchester. Despite his court appearances, he remains highly rated by Alex Ferguson.

Paul POGBA (Fra)
Age 18 (15.03.93)
Position Midfielder

Tall, gangly box-to-box midfielder controversially signed from Le Havre in 2009 amid accusations of poaching from the French club. Tipped to make the first team this season. "He has great ability. He has the physique and athleticism," says Ferguson.

Ryan TUNNICLIFFE
Age 18 (30.12.92)
Position Midfielder

Another of the victorious FA Youth Cup Final side and a tenacious tackler who is inevitably compared to Paul Scholes. Currently on loan to Championship side Peterborough United, who are managed by Ferguson's son, Darren.

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Soccer Cities The Ruhr

Peterjon Cresswell visits the footballing hotbed of north-west Germany

Connected by the local overland regional train, the S-Bahn, Germany's industrial heartland is home to Bundesliga champions **Borussia Dortmund** and German Cup holders **Schalke** in the top flight, along with **Duisburg** and **Bochum** in the second tier. All four enjoy a healthy fan base, with Dortmund and Schalke pulling in some of the highest attendances in Europe, while even modest **Rot-Weiss Essen**, who reached the German Cup Final as recently as 1994, attract relatively good crowds to their Regionalliga West games in the country's fourth division.

Dortmund and Schalke were formed by the amalgamation of local workers' clubs, mainly from the steel and coal industries, and are separated by a mere half-hour hop on the S-Bahn line 2, which takes you from the beer capital of Dortmund to the former coal hub of Gelsenkirchen, where Schalke are located.

Their rivalry began in the 1920s, when Schalke were the most skilful and successful team in Germany, winning six titles in nine years before the war. Dortmund then claimed the silverware in the 1950s and 1960s, with both clubs winning European honours in 1997: Dortmund beating Juventus 3-1 in the Champions League Final and Schalke overcoming Internazionale on penalties in the Final of the UEFA Cup.

Bragging rights... Schalke's Joel Matip (left) keeps Kevin Grosskreutz of Dortmund at bay during this year's German Super Cup, which Schalke won 4-3 on penalties after a 0-0 draw

SCHALKE

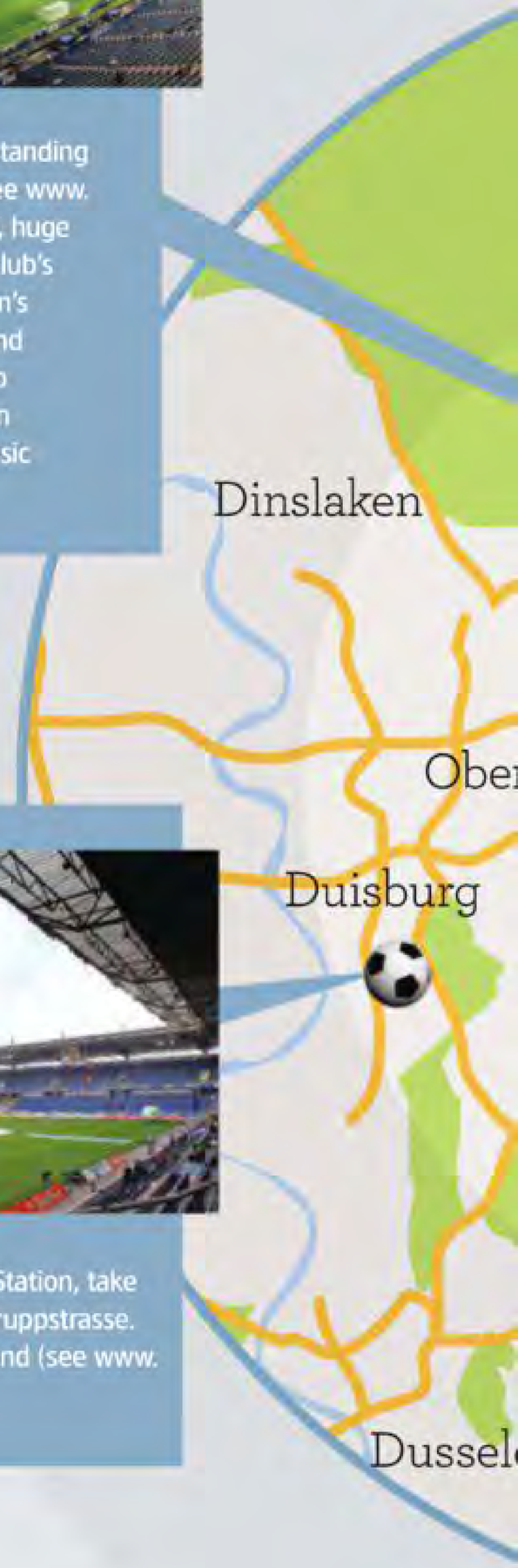
VELTINS-ARENA

Opened in 2001 as the Arena AufSchalke to replace the adjoining Parkstadion – which is now used for training and reserve matches – the 61,700-capacity stadium is a 15-minute journey from the main Gelsenkirchen station on S-Bahn line 302 towards Buer. Schalke charge €15 for standing fans, with seating tickets costing between €30 and €50 (see www.schalke04.com for details). The arena has a retractable roof, huge video screens and an imaginative museum that details the club's colourful history with film histories, a replica of a Schalke fan's bedroom and the private photo album of pre-war club legend Ernst Kuzorra. The main restaurant in the North Stand is also named after him. Don't miss the AufSchalke bar on the main Kurt-Schumacher-Strasse which is covered in images of classic moments and footballing legends.

DUISBURG

SCHAUINSLAND-REISEN-ARENA

Built on the site of the old Wedaustadion in 2004 and formerly known as the MSV-Arena, the stadium holds 31,500 and was the venue of the 2005 World Games. Duisburg is west of Essen, Bochum and Dortmund on the A40. From Duisburg Main Station, take bus 934 to Stadion/Wacholderstrasse or 923 to Stadion/Kruppstrasse. Tickets range from €10 to €33 to sit, and €5 to €7 to stand (see www.msv-duisburg.de).



REVIERDERBY

In theory, any match between clubs from the Ruhr is a Revierderby, although the term usually refers to games between Dortmund and Schalke. A 5-2 win at Dortmund in 1991 is still talked about by Schalke fans, as is the last-minute equaliser by their goalkeeper Jens Lehmann against the then-European champions in 1997. However, the penultimate game of the 2007 season is not so fondly remembered as defeat cost Schalke the league title.

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BOCHUM

RUHRSTADION

Also known as rewirpowerSTADION due to a sponsorship deal, the arena on Castroper Strasse holds nearly 30,000 spectators, with 16,000 seated. Built in 1921, the host venue for this year's Women's World Cup underwent a major overhaul in 2003 when a club shop, VIP lounges and medical facilities were incorporated into a five-storey structure. Tickets go on sale three weeks before match day, priced €16 for a seat, €11.50 to stand (see www.vfl-bochum.de for details). The ground is almost exactly equidistant between Essen and Dortmund on the A40 road. Alternatively, take the S1 S-Bahn to Bochum Main Station, then U-Bahn 308/318 to the ground three minutes away.

DIARY DATES

The first big local clash is on November 26 when Dortmund host Schalke in the Bundesliga. The return fixture will take place on the weekend of April 14, with Duisburg scheduled to host Bochum over the weekend of March 17.

FACT FILE

Gelsenkirchen

Dortmund

rhausen

Essen

Bochum

Witten

Ra ingen

Wuppertal

5 miles

10 km

do

BORUSSIA DORTMUND

SIGNAL IDUNA PARK

More commonly known as the Westfalenstadion, the imposing 80,000-capacity arena was built for the 1974 World Cup. The Sudtribune is Europe's largest standing terrace with room for 25,000 of Borussia's most loyal supporters. Tickets in this area are kept at a bargain €15, while seats range from €28 to €67, and all can be purchased from the club website (www.bvb.de) and then picked up two hours before kick-off at the Hinterlegungskasse Nord on Strobelallee. The stadium is in the south of the city, a 20-minute walk from the centre down Hohe Strasse, which is lined with bars. Alternatively, the ground has its own S-Bahn stop, Westfalenhallen. Holzwickede/Dortmund airport is 14 minutes away, while a train from the main central station in town takes four minutes. There is also a U-Bahn station on the U45 line, Westfalen Stadion. Next to the ground is the Biergarten, which is always packed before a big game. Originally, Borussia played at the Stadion Rote Erde, which is next door to the arena and home to the club's reserve side.

ROT-WEISS ESSEN

GEORG-MELCHES-STADION

The 15,000-capacity arena on Hafenstrasse has hardly changed shape since being built in 1939. Big games are now limited to ones against other clubs fallen on hard times, such as Fortuna Dusseldorf and Wuppertal. This season, Bochum's reserve team are also opponents. Standing prices are €10, seats €18 to €22 from www.eventim.de. Take the S2 S-Bahn line from Dortmund and alight at Essen-Bergeborbeck. Buses SB16, 166 and 196 run between Essen Main Station and Hafenstrasse.

CUP RUN

Duisburg made it all the way to the Final of last year's German Cup, but were then thrashed 5-0 by local big shots Schalke.

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THE INSIDER

The expert view on events off the pitch

Football's legal challenge

Arbitration body CAS is part of the problem rather than a source of resolution

In 1959, the Newcastle United inside-forward George Eastham went to the High Court to fight the tied employment arrangement in English football which was known as the "retain and transfer system". Eastham's recourse to the law of the land might not appear particularly revolutionary by the standards of this day and age, in which football's superstars rush to the High Court at the drop of a trouser leg, but those were different days, different times. It was an era, 14 years after the end of the Second World War, marked by an unquestioning, ingrained respect for authority, in which people were supposed to "know their place".

Few industries have retained and defended an innate social conservatism more enduringly than English football, hence FA chairman David Bernstein feeling the need to press for an element of positive discrimination when it comes to managerial appointment deliberations.

Eastham won his case and duly moved to Arsenal where he earned a place in England's 1966 World Cup-winning squad. It had cost him six months on the sidelines while the slow wheels of the law ground into action.

The contrasting administrative pace of the legal world and the sporting world creates dangerous complications for the running of the game, which makes the time it takes for the overarching Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to come up with definitive judgments a cause for serious concern.

Legal time issues are nothing new. After all, Jean-Marc Bosman secured his revolutionary verdict in the European Court in 1995 only after starting his fight five years earlier after a transfer from Liege to Dunkerque fell through.

The time-span worked in Bosman's favour since the European and Belgian football authorities had been lulled into a false sense of complacency. But at least the process did not affect the ongoing pace of competitions or administrative development.

This is not the case now in the ongoing challenges raised by Mohamed Bin Hammam and by Swiss club Sion.

Bin Hammam has just presented, in vain, his life-ban appeal to FIFA's appeals panel in Zurich. His latest rebuff was expected, not least by the Qatari.

However, his various explosions of anger – including his latest intemperate rant at Ethics vice-chair Petrus Damaseb – make it clear that he has no faith in the FIFA justice system and cannot wait to take his case to what he hopes will be the cleaner, clearer waters of CAS and then, if necessary, to the Swiss civil court system.

In the meantime he remains president of the Asian confederation which runs by far the largest of FIFA's six regions. Hence the AFC must struggle on in a vacuum which sees its potential next leaders more concerned with their own power play ahead of next year's congress rather than with the day job.

Back in Europe, the Sion case has cast CAS' failings into sharp focus. Its determination to protect and maintain its quasi-legal role means that the original concept of juridical delivery at speed has been lost.

To that extent CAS – now 27 years old – is exacerbating the problems in some of the most important cases brought before it. And not only football cases, either. Consider CAS' inability to rule in cycling's notorious Alberto Contador dope case before this year's Tour de France, in which CAS emerged as a part of the problem rather than a source of resolution.

> CAS is exacerbating the problems in some of the most important cases brought before it

As for Sion, it was back in early 2008 that their president, Christian Constantin, claimed to have signed Egypt goalkeeper Essam El Hadary from Al Ahly. The Egyptian club objected, but it was not until more than a year later, in June 2009, that FIFA's own disputes resolution committee found against Sion and imposed a two-window transfer ban.

Sion appealed to CAS, which lifted the transfer ban pending the completion of its own deliberations. But CAS did not deliver its own judgment until June 2010 – a year after FIFA's verdict and more than two years after the "signing".

Ineligible...Pascal Feindouno (second right) scored twice against Celtic but, according to FIFA, should not have been playing

CAS rejected Sion's appeal and reinstated the two-window transfer ban. Sion claim it came into effect then and there, in mid-summer 2010 – by which time they had signed at least three new players – and was completed with the closing of the January 2011 window.

FIFA, by contrast, considered that the ban applied to this year's two subsequent full windows. Hence the furore when Sion signed half-a-dozen players this summer and fielded several of them in both the Swiss league and the Europa League.

By the time the Europa League group stage was due to start, the appellate procedures within CAS, the Swiss federal courts and UEFA had fallen hopelessly out of sync; a sort of slow motion, sports/legal car crash.

FIFA statutes dictate that sporting disputes must not be taken to the civil courts on pain of expulsion from the international game. But that is a fragile stance. No one, in a "free" world, can be denied the right to seek justice under the law – and beyond sport's administrative boundaries if necessary.

Looking ahead, football will have to confront the sports access challenge created by the statehood ambitions of the likes of Palestine and Kosovo.

So it seems CAS will be more in demand than ever. But unless it can develop an effective fast-track system it will become ever more part of the problem than the resolution. WS

Hillsborough 96 deserve the truth

On October 17 the House of Commons will debate whether, ahead of next year's conclusion of the Hillsborough Independent Panel, government papers concerning the 1989 stadium disaster should be made public.

Around 140,000 signed an online petition – which is some 40,000 more than essential – supporting the release decision of Information Commissioner Christopher Graham on a request by the BBC.

In normal circumstances, cabinet papers are kept sealed for 30 years in order to protect contemporaneous confidentiality. However, the high public profile of the petition helped to persuade the Backbench Business Committee that this was one subject which needed an airing.

Not forgotten...the names of the 96 who died are recorded at Anfield as a memorial

The Cabinet Office has sought to keep the papers – including the opinions of then prime minister Margaret Thatcher and her colleagues – out of the public domain. It believes their release a few months early is unnecessary. That would be a mistake.

Hillsborough campaigners have been thwarted down the years by the establishment. They need to believe that, at last, the time for cover-ups – whether over MPs' expenses or the phone-hacking scandal – is over.

The 96 who died that day, their surviving families and their friends, deserve to know that, at last, they will learn the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Losing...Bernstein

Blatter's English obsession

FIFA president Sepp Blatter has accused England for whipping up antagonism to the world federation and its corruption-hit executive committee out of spite.

English football, he said in an interview in Brazil, has still not recovered from the shock of losing the FIFA presidency all the way back in 1974. Hence "they decided they would try to destroy it".

Asked about all the corruption allegations and his reform proposals – being delivered to the ExCo in late October – Blatter answered: "This animosity comes from England.

"Interesting is the timing of the accusations. It was just around the time when they failed to win host rights to the 2018 World Cup. Three weeks before the presidential election these accusations emerged.

"Let me tell you the truth. All this has been an act of revenge for [England's Stanley Rous] having lost the FIFA presidency in 1974 to [Brazil's] Joao Havelange. Still, they cannot accept that they no longer control FIFA. Since they cannot regain the presidency, they decided they would try to destroy it."

Blatter's blast questions once more the wisdom of FA chairman David Bernstein in intervening as he did at FIFA Congress back in June.

He sought vainly to delay the presidential election for which Blatter was, by then, the only candidate, and the scale of that political own goal is becoming increasingly clear.

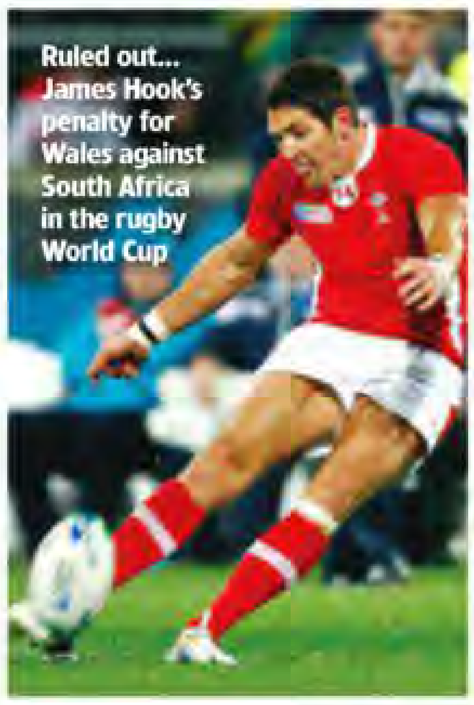
A role for Rummenigge?

Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, chairman of the European Club Association (ECA), made some war-like noises ahead of its Geneva congress. With FIFA and UEFA needing the clubs more than the clubs needed them, Sepp Blatter was heading for a similar fate to Egyptian despot Hosni Mubarak.

The ECA wants to slice the national-team calendar into tiny slices. That made for good headlines, but, let's be honest, it's also "just" a negotiating stance.

Technology talk is cheap

Some of the talk about bringing technology into football has been positively hysterical. Testing right now, at the behest of the International Board, focuses only on goal-line technology with an approval for high-level experimentation likely next spring.



Ruled out... James Hook's penalty for Wales against South Africa in the rugby World Cup

Inevitably that will be an encouraging foot in the door for proponents of technological assistance right across the pitch. They point with delusional self-confidence to its success in other sports such as rugby union, cricket, etc.

Yet the rugby World Cup was assailed by a "did-it/didn't-it" row over a points-scoring attempt which cost Wales victory over South Africa.

Not so easy, maybe.

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6 of the best

Japanese stars in Europe

Nick Bidwell profiles half a dozen exports from Japan who are making their mark in Europe

1 Eiji Kawashima

LIERSE (BLG)

AGE
28 (20.03.83)
POSITION
Goalkeeper

Japan's first-choice keeper Eiji Kawashima has never been lacking in drive or ambition, and as soon as his nation's 2010 World Cup expedition had drawn to a close he was looking for new frontiers to conquer, saying: "I straightaway understood that I could only improve if I was to switch to a superior championship in Europe."

Having made the decision to quit Kawasaki Frontale, he signed a two-year deal with newly promoted Belgian top-flight side Lierse and, although he had a few teething problems, by the onset of winter he was cutting such an impressive figure that English Premier League club West Bromwich Albion were reported to be ready to make a bid.

Nothing less than a superstar in his homeland, Kawashima has turned the Herman Vanderpoortenstadion into something of a Japanese outpost, with journalists and fans beating a path there in huge and wildly enthusiastic numbers.

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2

Akihiro Ienaga

MALLORCA (SPA)

AGE
25 (13.06.86)
POSITION
Winger

The second Japanese to play for Mallorca – following in the footsteps of Yoshito Okubo six years ago – winger Akihiro Ienaga was personally recruited in January by the Balearic club's vice-president, Llorenzo Serra Ferrer, who saw his signing as too good an opportunity to miss.

Apart from finding a player who reminded him of Manchester City and Spain star David Silva, the Mallorca chief was also delighted to discover that his target was available on a free transfer as his contract with Gamba Osaka stipulated that any move abroad would not involve a fee. Croat champions Dinamo Zagreb were also on the case, but Serra Ferrer moved quickly to seal a five-season deal for a player who made his international debut in 2007.

Some have suggested the move was motivated by Mallorca's desire for a greater international profile, but that should not be taken to mean that he is just a commercial prop. With his pace, ability in one-on-one duels, imagination and capacity to play on either flank – although the left side is his favoured domain – "Aki" is good enough to stand on his own two feet.

3

Yuto Nagatomo

INTERNAZIONALE (ITA)

AGE
25 (12.09.86)
POSITION
Left-back

National team defender Yuto Nagatomo has proved himself to be both a feisty operator and an outstanding overlapper since his arrival in Italy 12 months ago from J.League side Tokyo.

He initially joined Cesena on loan for five months, signing a long-term deal in January after impressing in Qatar as Japan won the Asian Cup. But as soon as he arrived back in Europe he was off again, loaned out to reigning Serie A and European champions Internazionale.

In a tough season when Inter relinquished both crowns – and had to make do with the more modest spoils of the Italian Cup – the 5ft 7in full-back was one of their rare bright spots, so it was no surprise when the *Nerazzurri* made the deal permanent, paying Cesena £5.6million, plus two youth-team prospects as an extra sweetener.

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4 Shinji Okazaki

STUTTGART (GER)

AGE
25 (16.04.86)
POSITION
Forward

Bought for £450,000 early this year from Shimizu S-Pulse, centre-forward or left-sided attacker Shinji Okazaki may have scored only twice in 12 games during his first six months in the Bundesliga, but fans of *Die Roten* are not writing him off just yet. Okazaki's scoring record for Japan – 22 in 46 matches – is an enviable one, and he is a gritty, hungry character with a wide repertoire of tricks to call on.

Capable of wriggling out of the tightest of spots, he can finish with either delicacy or power, and although just 5ft 9in he has more than enough aerial craft.

With the culture shock of playing in Germany no longer an issue, a much better campaign should be on the cards this term and his morale will have been boosted by the memorable long-range goal he scored on the opening day of the season against Schalke.

5 Takashi Usami

BAYERN MUNICH (GER) – ON LOAN FROM GAMBA OSAKA

AGE
19 (06.05.92)
POSITION
Forward

"Stupid people don't do well in football," wrote Bayern loanee Takeshi Usami in a recent diary piece for a Japanese magazine, and the attacking all-rounder is clearly a bright, inventive, quick thinker himself.

Voted the best newcomer in the J.League last year, the Gamba Osaka starlet has much riding on the next eight months or so. A good showing in the Bundesliga will have Bayern champing at the bit to take up their option to sign him permanently, while a season on the bench will almost certainly signal *"sayonara"*.

A quick dribbler with an eye for goal, Usami can also play as a deep-lying striker, a playmaker or on either flank in midfield. Barely 17 when he made his debut for Gamba, he has represented his country at all levels from under-13 upwards and made his senior bow this summer in the Kirin Cup.

6 Michihiro Yasuda

VITESSE ARNHEM (HOL)

AGE
23 (20.12.87)
POSITION
Right-back

In recent times a number of Japanese players have sparkled in Dutch football – notably midfielders Shinji Ono at Feyenoord and Keisuke Honda with VVV Venlo – and, since joining Vitesse from Gamba Osaka in January, Michihiro Yasuda has been making similarly impressive headway.

An energetic and intelligent raider, the full-back has made huge strides defensively and is much more assured than when he first arrived in Holland. Asked to compare the J.League and the Eredivisie, he simply points to the greater speed and intensity of the Dutch game with its relentless pressing.

Despite his youth, he came to Holland having won a glut of trophies with Gamba – Emperor's Cup in 2008 and 2009, J.League Cup in 2007 and the 2008 Asian Champions League – and also played in the 2008 Club World Cup, lining up against Cristiano Ronaldo and Manchester United.

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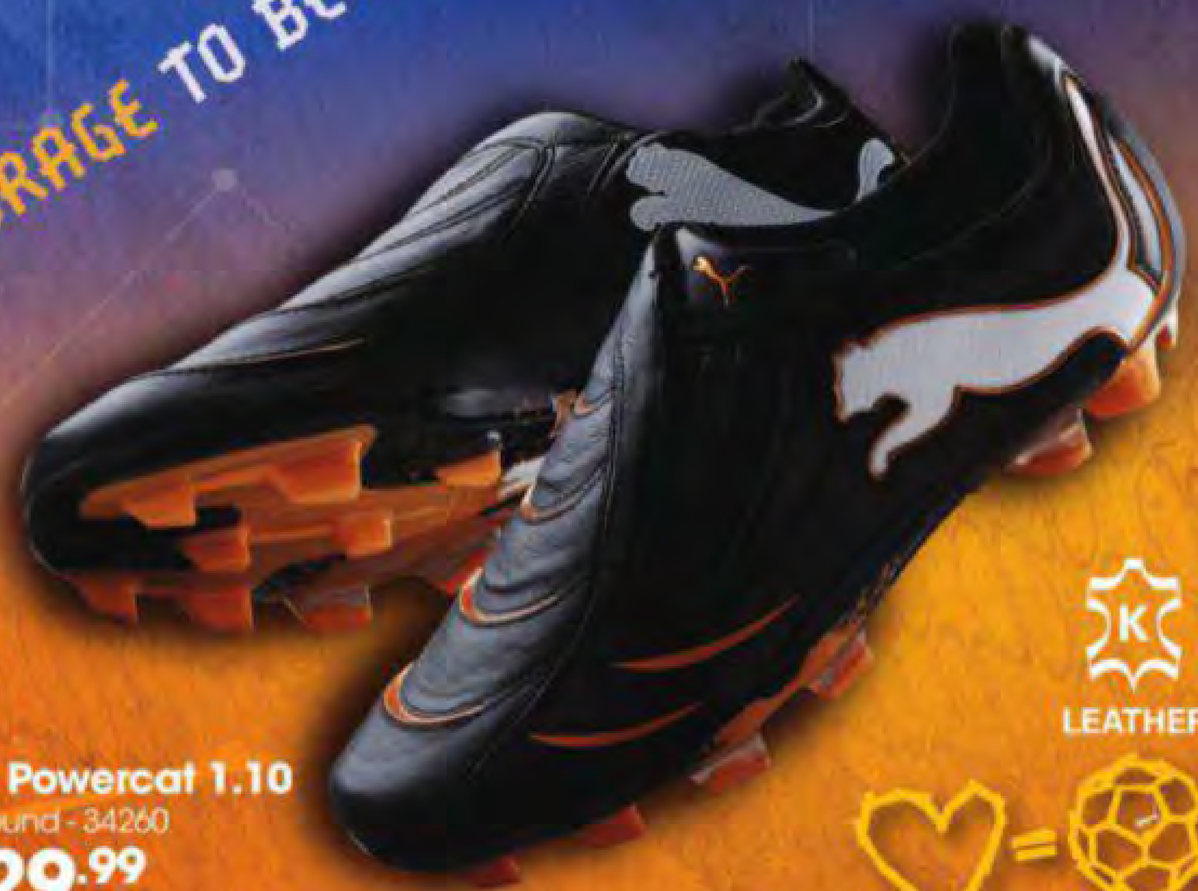

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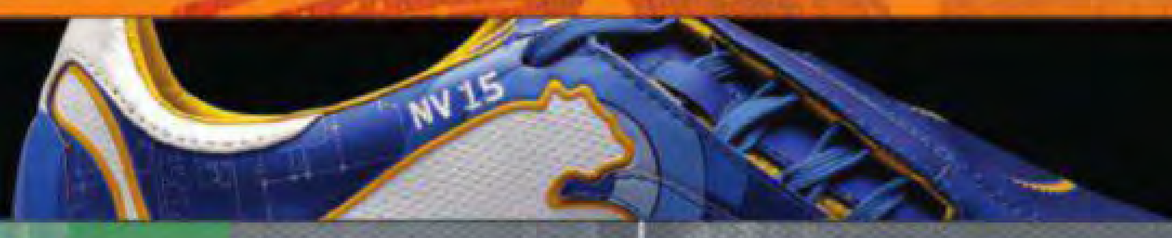

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High fliers...Dejan Lovren of Lyon (right) and Montpellier's Olivier Giroud clash in Ligue 1

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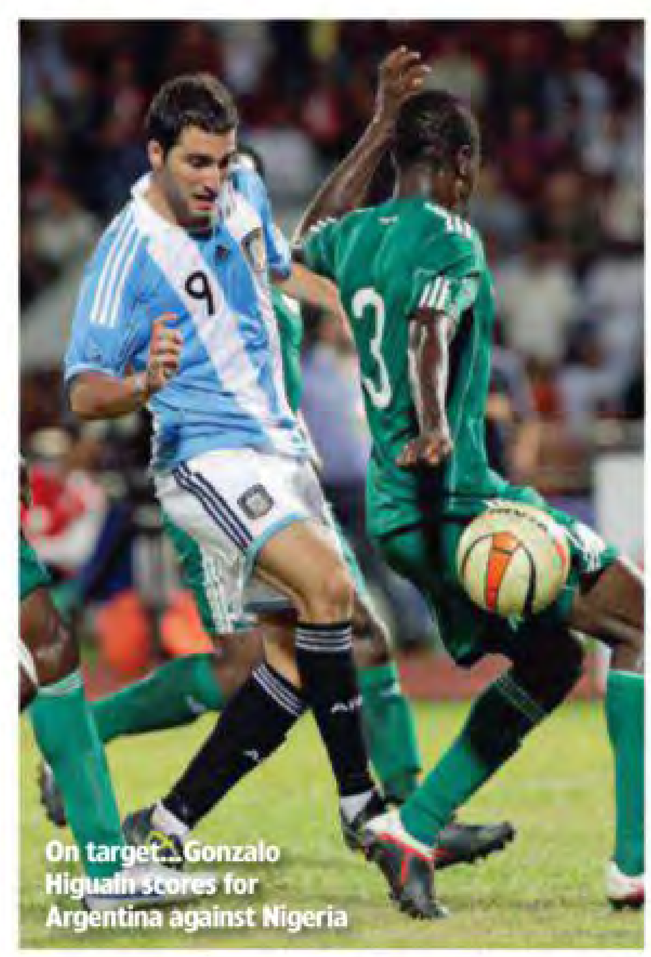

On target...Gonzalo Higuain scores for Argentina against Nigeria

Off...Bahrian's Mohamed Tayeb

BAHRAIN

Play suspended

Bahrain's World Cup qualifier in Indonesia was temporarily suspended in the 76th minute when the visitors left the pitch in protest at fireworks and flares being let off in Jakarta's Gelora Bung Karno Stadium.

Play resumed after a 15-minute break and Bahrain continued on their way to a 2-0 victory.

CHINA

Camacho's first win

The arrival of former Charlton Athletic and Celtic midfielder Zheng Zhi as a 67th-minute sub helped Jose Antonio Camacho begin his career as China coach with a win as the ex-Real Madrid and Spain boss' side came from a goal behind to beat Singapore 2-1 in their World Cup qualifier.

Aleksandar Duric gave the visitors a shock lead after 33 minutes, before Zheng scored from the penalty spot with virtually his first kick of the match. He was then involved in Yu Hai's winner 17 minutes from time.

However, Camacho's side

Game changer...Zheng (left)

INTERNATIONALS

Internationals

2014 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

ASIA SECTION
3rd round

Group A

Sep 2 - Kunming
China 2 (Zheng Zhi pen 69, Yu Hai 73)
Singapore 1 (Duric 33)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** El Haddad (Leb)
China: Yang Zhi - Liu Jianye, Du Wei, Li Weifeng, Sun Xiang, Zhao Xuri, Huang Bowen (Zheng Zhi 67), Qu Bo (Yu Dabao 66), Chen Tao, Yu Hai (Hao Junmin 90), Yang Xu.

Sep 2 - Arbil
Iraq 0
Jordan 2 (Abdel Fattah 43, Deeb 47)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Shukralla (Bhr)

Sep 6 - Amman
Jordan 2 (Abdelrahman 49, Deeb 54)
China 1 (Hao Junmin 56)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Irmatov (Uzb)
China: Yang Zhi - Sun Xiang, Li Weifeng, Feng Xiaoting, Zhao Xuri, Hao Junmin, Yang Xu, Liu Jianye (Wu Xi 80), Huang Bowen (Yu Dabao 59), Yu Hai (Feng Renliang 78), Zheng Zhi.

Sep 6 - Singapore
Singapore 0
Iraq 2 (Abdul Zahra 49, Mahmood 86)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,505. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jordan	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
China	2	1	0	1	3	3	3
Iraq	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Singapore	2	0	0	2	1	4	0

Group B

Sep 2 - Goyang
South Korea 6 (Park Chu-young 7, 45+1, 67, Ji Dong-won 66, 85, Kim Jung-woo 82)
Lebanon 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 37,655. **Ref:** Bashir (Sin)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Hong Jeong-ho, Hong Chul, Lee Jung-soo, Cha Du-ri, Lee Yong-rae, Ji Dong-won, Koo Ja-cheol (Kim Jung-woo 75), Ki Sung-yeung, Nam Tae-hee (Yoon Bit-garam 83), Park Chu-young (Lee Keun-ho 70).

Sep 2 - Al Ain City
United Arab Emirates 2 (Al Hammadi 84, Khalil 89)
Kuwait 3 (Al Sulaiman 7, 65, Al Mutwa 51)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 8,715. **Ref:** Basma (Syr)

Sep 6 - Kuwait City
Kuwait 1 (Fadel 53)
South Korea 1 (Park Chu-young 8)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Torky (Irn)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Cha Du-ri (Kim Jae-sung 17), Hong Jeong-ho, Lee Jung-soo, Hong Chul, Ki Sung-yeung, Lee Yong-rae, Nam Tae-hee (Yeom Ki-hun 64), Koo Ja-cheol (Kim Jung-woo 79), Park Chu-young, Ji Dong-won.

Sep 6 - Beirut
Lebanon 3 (Ghadar pen 37, Moghrabi 52, Antar 83)
United Arab Emirates 1 (Khamis 15)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Faghani (Irn)

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	2	1	1	0	7	1	4
Kuwait	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Lebanon	2	1	0	1	3	7	3
UAE	2	0	0	2	3	6	0

Group C

Sep 2 - Saitama
Japan 1 (Yoshida 90+4)
North Korea 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 62,000. **Ref:** Al Badwawi (UAE)
Sent off: Pak Kwang-ryong (North Korea) 84min
Japan: Kawashima - Uchida, Yoshida, Konno, Komano, Hasebe, Endo, Kashiwagi (Kiyotake 60), Okazaki, Kagawa, Lee (Havenaar 70).

Sep 2 - Tursunzade
Tajikistan 0
Uzbekistan 1 (Shatskikh 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Tan (Chn)

Sep 6 - Pyongyang
North Korea 1 (Pak Nam-chol 14)
Tajikistan 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Vo (Vie)

Sep 6 - Tashkent
Uzbekistan 1 (Djeparov 8)
Japan 1 (Okazaki 65)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 32,000. **Ref:** Al Ghamdi (Sau)
Japan: Kawashima - Uchida, Yoshida, Konno, Komano (Makino 81), Hasebe, Endo, Okazaki, Abe (Kiyotake 46), Kagawa, Lee (Havenaar 65).

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Uzbekistan	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
North Korea	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Tajikistan*	2	0	0	2	0	2	0

**Tajikistan replaced Syria, who had beaten the Tajiks in the previous round but were subsequently expelled from the competition for fielding an ineligible player in both legs of that tie*

Group D

Sep 2 - Brisbane
Australia 2 (Kennedy 58, Brosque 86)
Thailand 1 (Teerasil 15)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,540. **Ref:** Balideh (Qat)
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Wilkshire, Spiranovic, Kilkenny, McKay, Emerton (Brosque 74), Valeri, Holman (Troisi 90+1), Cahill (Kruse 71), Kennedy.

Sep 2 - Muscat
Oman 0
Saudi Arabia 0
Att: 14,000. **Ref:** Abdou (Qat)

Sep 6 - Dammam
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al Shamrani 65)
Australia 3 (Kennedy 40, 56, Wilkshire pen 77)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Nishimura (Jap)
Australia: Schwarzer - Neill, Ognenovski, Zullo (Kruse 79), Wilkshire, Jedinak, McKay, Valeri, Emerton, Holman (Cahill 87), Kennedy (Milligan 89).

Sep 6 - Bangkok
Thailand 3 (Sompong 35, Teerasil 41, Al Farsi og 90+1)
Oman 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 19,000. **Ref:** Kim (SKo)

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Australia	2	2	0	0	5	2	6
Thailand	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Saudi Arabia	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Oman	2	0	1	1	0	3	1

Group E

Sep 2 - Manama
Bahrain 0
Qatar 0
Att: 5,000. **Ref:** Zarouni (UAE)

Sep 2 - Tehran
Iran 3 (Nekounam 53, 75, Teymourian 87)
Indonesia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 75,800. **Ref:** Toma (Jap)
Iran: Rahmati - Pooladi, J Hosseini, Haddadifar (Teymourian 70), Aghili, K Heydari, Nekounam, Karimi, Majidi, Khalatbary (Hajsafy 65), G Rezaei (Mahini 64).

Sep 6 - Jakarta
Indonesia 0
Bahrain 2 (Shubbar 45+2, Abdullatif 71)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Lee (SKo)

Sep 6 - Doha
Qatar 1 (El Sayed 56)
Iran 1 (Aghili 46)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,125. **Ref:** Choi (SKo)
Iran: Rahmati - Pooladi, J Hosseini, Teymourian, Aghili, K Heydari, Nekounam (M Zare 37), Karimi (Majidi 70), Khalatbary (Jabbari 63), Ansarifard, G Rezaei.

WC QUALS: ASIA – 3RD ROUND – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
Bahrain	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Qatar	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Indonesia	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

Top 2 in each group qualify for 4th round

CONCACAF SECTION
2nd round

Group A

Sep 2 - San Salvador
El Salvador 3 (Zelaya 54, pen 78, Bautista 64)
Dominican Republic 2 (Cruz 66, Peralta 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 25,272. **Ref:** De la Rosa (Pan)
Sent off: Ubiera (Dominican Republic) 57min

Sep 2 - Paramaribo
Surinam 1 (Mando pen 11)
Cayman Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,000. **Ref:** Skeete (Bds)

Sep 6 - Georgetown
Cayman Islands 1 (Ebanks pen 73)
El Salvador 4 (Bautista 49, Anaya 62, 80, Garcia 90+3)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,200. **Ref:** Rodas (Gtm)

Sep 6 - San Cristobal
Dominican Republic 1 (Ozuna 68)
Surinam 1 (Mando pen 25)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 2,300. **Ref:** Castro (Hnd)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
El Salvador	2	2	0	0	7	3	6
Surinam	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Dominican Rep	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Cayman Is	2	0	0	2	1	5	0

Group B

Sep 2 - Georgetown
Guyana 2 (Beveney 25, Pollard 75)
Barbados 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** St Catherine (StL)

Sep 2 - Port of Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (K Jones 45)
Bermuda 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Perea (Pan)

Sep 6 - Bridgetown
Barbados 0
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (K Daniel 17, Roberts 67)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 775. **Ref:** Bonilla (ESv)

Sep 6 - Georgetown
Guyana 2 (Mills 50, 60)
Bermuda 1 (K Smith 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Geiger (USA)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guyana	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Trinidad & Tob	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Bermuda	2	0	0	2	1	3	0
Barbados	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

Group C

Sep 2 - Roseau
Dominica 0
Nicaragua 2 (Leguias 1, Rodriguez 36)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Legister (Jam)

Sep 6 - Managua
Nicaragua 1 (Torres og 18)
Panama 2 (Tejada 7, Perez 50)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 10,521. **Ref:** Reyna (Gtm)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nicaragua	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Panama	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Dominica	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

Bahamas withdrew before group games started

Group D

Sep 2 - Toronto
Canada 4 (Simpson 6, 61, De Rosario pen 51, Johnson 90+1)
St Lucia 1 (Paul 7)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 11,500. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Sent off: Williams (St Lucia) 87min
Canada: Hirschfeld - Beaulieu-Bourgault, Hainault, McKenna, Jazic, De Guzman, Hutchinson (Johnson 69), De Rosario, Hume (Haber 82), Jackson, Simpson (Ricketts 69).

Sep 2 - Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 0
Puerto Rico 0
Att: 2,500. **Ref:** Arellano (Mex)

Sep 6 - Bayamon
Puerto Rico 0
Canada 3 (Hume 42, Jackson 84, Ricketts 90+2)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Canada: Hirschfeld - Edgar, McKenna, Hainault, Klukowski, De Guzman, Hume, Johnson, Simpson (Ricketts 84), Dunfield (Jackson 62), De Rosario.

suffered a shock defeat four days later, losing 2-1 away to Jordan.

COSTA RICA

Timbers' Wallace fells Klinsmann

Portland Timbers' midfielder Rodney Wallace scored less than five minutes after coming on as a substitute for his international debut as Costa Rica beat the USA 1-0 in a friendly and handed Jurgen Klinsmann his first defeat as coach of the United States.

EGYPT

New competition for continent's under-23s

Egypt is to host the inaugural CAF Under-23 Championship, which will double up as Africa's qualifying tournament for the 2012 Olympics.

The competition, which runs from November 26 until Decemebr 10, will feature the host nation, along with Algeria, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa. The top three teams automatically qualify for London 2012, while the fourth-placed team will face a team from Asia in a play-off.

Wembley winner...Young

ENGLAND

Home victory at last

England will qualify for the European Championship finals next year if they manage to avoid defeat in their final group game, away to Montenegro on October 7, after Ashley Young's goal gave them a 1-0 win against Wales. The victory at Wembley was England's first at home in a year.

Sep 6 - Gros Islet
St Lucia 2 (Pierre 65, Valcin 84)
St Kitts & Nevis 4 (Lake 7, J Francis 12, O Mitchum 15, Elliott 44)
HT: 0-4. **Att:** 2,005. **Ref:** Thomas (Jam)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Canada	2	2	0	0	7	1	6
St Kitts & N'vis	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
Puerto Rico	2	0	1	1	0	3	1
St Lucia	2	0	0	2	3	8	0

Group E

Sep 2 - St George's
Grenada 0
Belize 3 (McCaulay 11, 78, Roches 35)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 2,600. **Ref:** Rubalcaba (Cub)

Sep 2 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 4 (Pappa 14, Flores 30, M Rodriguez 52, Garcia 71)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Andino (Hnd)
Sent off: Browne (St Vincent) 88min

Sep 6 - Belmopan
Belize 1 (McCauley 77)
Guatemala 2 (G Cabrera 4, M Lopez 75)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 3,027. **Ref:** Mejia (ESv)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guatemala	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Belize	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Grenada	1	0	0	1	0	3	0
St Vincent & G	1	0	0	1	0	4	0

Group F

Sep 2 - St John's
Antigua & Barbuda 5 (Joseph 35, Griffith 40, T Thomas 55, Byers 72, 85)
Curacao 2 (Meulens 10, Siberie 71)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Santos (PR)

Sep 2 - Port-au-Prince
Haiti 6 (Marcelin 19, Maurice 27, K Pierre-Louis 45, Constant 62, Alexandre 65, 77)
US Virgin Islands 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Cruz (CR)

Sep 6 - Willemstad
Curacao 2 (De Waard 12, Zimmerman 43)
Haiti 4 (Lafrance 37, Marcelin 58, Guerrier 61, Zimmerman og 75)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Solis (CR)

Sep 6 - Frederiksted
US Virgin Islands 1 (Browne 49)
Antigua & Barbuda 8 (Christian 18, Byers pen 38, 51, 57, Cochrane 47, Dublin 54, Burton 68, 74)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 250. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)

WC QUALS: CONCACAF – 2ND ROUND – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Antigua & B	2	2	0	0	13	3	6
Haiti	2	2	0	0	10	2	6
Curacao	2	0	0	2	4	9	0
US Virgin Is	2	0	0	2	1	14	0

Group winners qualify for the 3rd round, to which Costa Rica, Cuba, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico and the United States received byes

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Group A

Sep 2 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Aliyev 86)
Belgium 1 (Simons pen 55)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Probert (Eng)
Belgium: Mignolet - Alderweireld, Vertonghen, Kompany, Lombaerts, Simons, Hazard, Fellaini, Mertens, Witsel, Lukaku (De Camargo 61).

Sep 2 - Gelsenkirchen
Germany 6 (Klose 8, Ozil 23, 47, Podolski 28, Schurrle 84, Gotze 89)
Austria 2 (Arnautovic 42, Harnik 51)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 53,313. **Ref:** Tagliavento (Ita)
Germany: Neuer - Howedes (Boateng 46), Hummels, Badstuber, Lahm, Schweinsteiger, Kroos (Gotze 85), Muller, Ozil, Podolski (Schurrle 74), Klose.
Austria: Gratzei - Klein, Schiemer, Pogatetz, Fuchs, Dag, Baumgartlinger, Alaba, Royer (Hoffer 73), Harnik, Arnautovic.

Sep 2 - Istanbul
Turkey 2 (Burak 31, Arda 90+6)
Kazakhstan 1 (Konysbayev 55)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Turpin (Fra)
Turkey: Volkan - Sabri, Hakan Balta, Serdar, Emre Belozoglu (Gokhan Tore 60), Selcuk Inan, Mehmet Ekici (Selcuk Sahin 51), Egemen, Arda, Kazim-Richards (Umut 82), Burak.
Sent off: Selcuk Inan 90+2min.

Sep 6 - Vienna
Austria 0
Turkey 0
Ref: Undiano Mallenco (Spa)
Austria: Grunwald - Dag, Schiemer, Pogatetz, Fuchs, Baumgartlinger, Royer (Hoffer 67), Scharner, Harnik, Alaba, Arnautovic (Maierhofer 90+3).
Turkey: Volkan - Sabri, Servet, Egemen, Hakan Balta, Selcuk Sahin, Mehmet Topal, Yekta, Arda, Burak (Gokhan Tore 90+3), Umut.

Sep 6 - Baku
Azerbaijan 3 (Aliyev 53, Shukurov pen 62, Javadov 68)
Kazakhstan 2 (Ostapenko 20, Yevstigneyev 77)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hermansen (Den)

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany (Q)	8	8	0	0	28	5	24
Turkey	8	4	2	2	11	8	14
Belgium	8	3	3	2	16	11	12
Austria	8	2	2	4	12	16	8
Azerbaijan	8	2	1	5	9	21	7
Kazakhstan	8	1	0	7	5	20	3

Remaining games

07.10.11	Azerbaijan v Austria
07.10.11	Belgium v Kazakhstan
07.10.11	Turkey v Germany
11.10.11	Germany v Belgium
11.10.11	Kazakhstan v Austria
11.10.11	Turkey v Azerbaijan

Group B

Sep 2 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 0
Armenia 3 (Pizzelli 35, G Ghazaryan 75, Henrikh Mkhitaryan pen 90+1)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Kostadinov (Bul)
Sent off: I Lima (Andorra) 90min

Sep 2 - Dublin
Republic of Ireland 0
Slovakia 0
Ref: Proenca (Por)
Rep Ireland: Given - O'Shea, Dunne, St Ledger, Ward, Duff, Andrews, Whelan, McGeady (S Hunt 85), Doyle (Cox 64), Keane.
Slovakia: Mucha - Pekarik, Skrtel, Durica, Cech, Hamsik, Karhan, Kucka (Guede 77), Weiss (Jendrisek 85), Stoch, Holosko (Vittek 88).

Sep 2 - Moscow
Russia 1 (Semshov 41)
Macedonia 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Yildirim (Tur)
Sent off: Pandev (Macedonia) 90+5min
Russia: Malafeev - Anyukov, V Berezutsky, A Berezutsky, Zhirkov, Semshov (Pavlyuchenko 46), Denisov, Shirokov (Glushakov 88), Arshavin, Zyryanov (Torbinsky 60), Kerzhakov.

Sep 6 - Skopje
Macedonia 1 (Ivanovski 59)
Andorra 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Whitby (Wal)

Sep 6 - Moscow
Russia 0
Republic of Ireland 0
Ref: Brych (Ger)
Russia: Malafeev - Anyukov, Ignashevich, V Berezutsky, A Berezutsky, Zyryanov, Shirokov, Semshov, Arshavin, Zhirkov (Bilyaletdinov 75), Kerzhakov (Pavlyuchenko 54).
Rep Ireland: Given - Kelly, Dunne, O'Dea, Ward, Duff (S Hunt 67), Whelan, Andrews, McGeady, Doyle (Cox 58), Keane.

Sep 6 - Zilina
Slovakia 0
Armenia 4 (Movsisyan 57, Henrikh Mkhitaryan 70, G Ghazaryan 80, Sarkisov 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Borski (Pol)

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Russia	8	5	2	1	10	4	17
Rep of Ireland	8	4	3	1	11	6	15
Armenia	8	4	2	2	17	7	14
Slovakia	8	4	2	2	6	8	14
Macedonia	8	2	1	5	6	9	7
Andorra	8	0	0	8	1	17	0

Remaining games

07.10.11	Andorra v Rep of Ireland
07.10.11	Armenia v Macedonia
07.10.11	Slovakia v Russia
11.10.11	Macedonia v Slovakia
11.10.11	Rep of Ireland v Armenia
11.10.11	Russia v Andorra

Group C

Sep 2 - Torshavn
Faroe Islands 0
Italy 1 (Cassano 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Bognar (Hun)
Italy: Buffon - Maggio, Ranocchia, Chiellini, Criscito, Thiago Motta (Aquilani 73), Pirlo, De Rossi, Montolivo, Cassano (Balotelli 85), Rossi (Pazzini 59).

Sep 2 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 0
Serbia 1 (Pantelic 67)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,026. **Ref:** Einwaller (Aut)
Northern Ireland: Camp - McAuley, Cathcart, Hughes, J Evans, Baird, C Evans (McGinn 59), Davis, McCann (Feeney 71), Brunt, Healy (McQuoid 84).
Serbia: Jorgacevic - Rajkovic, Ivanovic, Subotic, Kolarov, Z Tosic (Ljajic 79), D Stankovic, Ninkovic (Petrovic 74), Kuzmanovic (Fejsa 89), Jovanovic, Pantelic.

Sep 2 - Ljubljana
Slovenia 1 (Matavz 78)
Estonia 2 (Vassiljev pen 29, Purje 81)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Studer (Swi)

Sep 6 - Tallinn
Estonia 4 (Vunk 29, Kink 32, Zenjov 60, Saag 90+3)
Northern Ireland 1 (Piiroja og 40)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 8,660. **Ref:** Stalhammar (Swe)
Northern Ireland: Camp - Hughes, Cathcart, Baird, McAuley, Clingan, Davis, Brunt, McCann, McGinn (McQuoid 65), Healy (Feeney 65).

Sep 6 - Florence
Italy 1 (Pazzini 84)
Slovenia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Moen (Nor)
Italy: Buffon - Cassani, Ranocchia, Chiellini, Balzaretti, Thiago Motta (Marchisio 46), Pirlo, De Rossi, Montolivo (Balotelli 76), Rossi, Cassano (Pazzini 61).
Slovenia: J Handanovic - Brecko, Suler, Cesar, Jokic, Birsa (Ilicic 57), Koren, Radosavljevic, Kirm (Dedic 87), Novakovic, Vrsic (Pecnik 76).

Sep 6 - Belgrade
Serbia 3 (Jovanovic 6, Z Tosic 22, Kuzmanovic 69)
Faroe Islands 1 (Benjaminsen 37)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Amirkhanyan (Arm)
Serbia: Jorgacevic - Bisevac (Tomovic 45), Ivanovic, Subotic, Kolarov, Z Tosic, D Stankovic (Petrovic 46), Ninkovic (Fejsa 82), Kuzmanovic, Jovanovic, Pantelic.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy (Q)	8	7	1	0	16	1	22
Serbia	8	4	2	2	12	10	14
Estonia	9	4	1	4	13	13	13
Slovenia	9	3	2	4	10	7	11
N Ireland	8	2	3	3	8	8	9
Faroe Islands	10	1	1	8	6	26	4

Remaining games

07.10.11	N Ireland v Estonia
07.10.11	Serbia v Italy
11.10.11	Italy v N Ireland
11.10.11	Slovenia v Serbia

Scoring goals for Ninis

GREECE

Ninis' six months out

Panathinaikos winger Sotiris Ninis has been ruled out for six months after tearing cruciate ligaments in a knee moments after scoring the only goal of the game in the Euro qualifier against Israel in Tel Aviv.

Without the 21-year-old, Greece were held 1-1 by Latvia in their next qualifier four days later.

IRAQ

Zico off the mark

Having lost their opening World Cup qualifier 2-0 at home to Jordan, Brazilian coach Zico saw his new charges win a competitive fixture for the first time since he took over with a 2-0 victory against Singapore. Alaa Abdul Zahra and Younis Mahmoud were Iraq's scorers.

In charge...Zico (right)

7 successive clean sheets kept by the Republic of Ireland, who have not conceded for 691 minutes

Group D

Sep 2 - Tirana
Albania 1 (Bogdani 47)
France 2 (Benzema 11, M'Vila 18)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 19,500. **Ref:** Nikolaev (Rus)
France: Lloris - Kaboul, Reveillere, Abidal, Evra, A Diarra, Nasri, M'Vila, Malouda (Martin 82), Ribery, Benzema.

Sep 2 - Minsk
Belarus 0
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Salihovic pen 22, Medunjanin 24)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Pandza, Papac, Spahic, Rahimic, Pjanic, Zahirovic, Salihovic (Maletic 72), Lulic, Medunjanin (Muslimovic 88), Dzeko (Misimovic 80).

Sep 2 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Romania 2 (Torje 34, 45)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 3,000. **Ref:** Karasev (Rus)
Romania: Tatarusanu - Matel, Galamaz (Chiriches 62), Goian, Rat, Cocis, Lazar, Tanase, Torje (Nicolita 76), Marica (Stancu 87), Bucur.

Sep 6 - Zenica
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Misimovic 87)
Belarus 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Sent off: Kalachev 34min, Martynovich 85min (both Belarus)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Begovic - Pandza (Misimovic 45+1), Papac, Rahimic, Mujdza, Zahirovic, Salihovic (Stilic 19), Lulic, Ibricic (Zec 64), Medunjanin, Dzeko.

Sep 6 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 2 (Bettmer 27, Joachim 78)
Albania 1 (Bogdani 64)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Kari (Fin)
Sent off: Agolli 53min, Bogdani 85min (both Albania)

Sep 6 - Bucharest
Romania 0
France 0
Att: 49,182. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Romania: Tatarusanu - Luchin, Chiriches, Goian, Rat, Bourceanu, Nicolita, Lazar (Stancu 43), Cocis, Tanase, Marica (Bucur 90).
France: Lloris - Sagna, Rami, Abidal, Evra, Cabaye (Nasri 75), M'Vila, Valbuena (Remy 71), Martin, Ribery, Benzema.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	8	5	2	1	11	3	17
Bosnia-Herz	8	5	1	2	11	7	16
Romania	8	3	3	2	10	6	12
Belarus	9	3	3	3	6	5	12
Albania	8	2	2	4	6	10	8
Luxembourg	9	1	1	7	3	16	4

Remaining games
07.10.11 Bosnia-Herz v Luxembourg
07.10.11 France v Albania
07.10.11 Romania v Belarus
11.10.11 Albania v Romania
11.10.11 France v Bosnia-Herz

Group E

Sep 2 - Helsinki
Finland 4 (Hamalainen 11, 43, Forssell pen 52, Armas og 70)
Moldova 1 (Alexeev 85)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kakos (Gre)

Sep 2 - Eindhoven
Holland 11 (Van Persie 7, 65, 67, 79, Sneijder 12, 87, Heitinga 17, Kuyt 49, Huntelaar 56, 77, Wijnaldum 89)
San Marino 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Liany (Isr)
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Pieters, Van Persie, Sneijder, Strootman (Wijnaldum 86), Van Bommel (Maduro 74), Kuyt (Elia 74), Huntelaar.

Sep 2 - Budapest
Hungary 2 (Szabics 44, Rudolf 90)
Sweden 1 (Wilhelmsson 60)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 26,000. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
Hungary: Kiraly - Liptak (Sandor 74), Korcsmar, Varga, Laczko, Elek, Pinter, Szabics (Priskin 80), Hajnal (Stieber 66), Koman, Rudolf.
Sweden: Isaksson - Lustig, Granqvist, Majstorovic, Wendt, S Larsson (Toivonen 68), A Svensson (R Elm 53), Kallstrom (Wernbloom 88), Wilhelmsson, Ibrahimovic, Elmander.

Sep 6 - Helsinki
Finland 0
Holland 2 (Strootman 29, L De Jong 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 21,580. **Ref:** Grafe (Ger)
Sent off: Hetemaj (Finland) 60min
Holland: Stekelenburg - Van der Wiel, Heitinga, Mathijsen, Pieters, Van Persie (Elia 68), Sneijder, Strootman, Van Bommel, Kuyt, Huntelaar (L De Jong 68).

Sep 6 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Hungary 2 (Vanczak 7, Rudolf 83)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)

Sep 6 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Sweden 5 (Kallstrom 64, Wilhelmsson 70, 90+3, M Olsson 81, Hysen 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 2,946. **Ref:** McLean (Sco)
Sent off: D Simoncini (San Marino) 53min
Sweden: Isaksson - Lustig, Granqvist, Majstorovic, Toivonen (S Larsson 57), M Olsson, R Elm (A Svensson 65), Kallstrom, Wilhelmsson, Ibrahimovic, Elmander (Hysen 67).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland (Q)	8	8	0	0	34	5	24
Sweden	8	6	0	2	26	8	18
Hungary	9	6	0	3	22	14	18
Finland	8	3	0	5	15	14	9
Moldova	8	2	0	6	8	15	6
San Marino	9	0	0	9	0	49	0

Remaining games
07.10.11 Finland v Sweden
07.10.11 Holland v Moldova
11.10.11 Hungary v Finland
11.10.11 Moldova v San Marino
11.10.11 Sweden v Holland

Group F

Sep 2 - Tbilisi
Georgia 0
Latvia 1 (Cauna 64)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Trattou (Cyp)

Sep 2 - Tel Aviv
Israel 0
Greece 1 (Ninis 60)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Israel: Aouate - Shpungin, Ben Haim, Gershon, Kayal, A Cohen (Natcho 61), Refaelov, Shechter (Hemed 55), Benayoun, Zahavi (Damari 55), Ben Harush.
Greece: Sifakis - Zaradoukas, A Papadopoulos, Torosidis, Kafes (Makos 42), Katsouranis, K Papadopoulos, Karagounis, Salpigidis (Maniatis 84), Ninis (Fetfatzidis 77), Samaras.

Sep 2 - Valletta
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 38)
Croatia 3 (Vukojevic 11, Badelj 32, Lovren 68)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Chapron (Fra)
Croatia: Pletikosa - Strinic, Lovren, Corluka, Badelj (Eduardo 82), Vukojevic, Srna, Mandzukic, Vrsaljko, Perisic (Dujmovic 68), Klasnic (Kalinic 46).

Sep 6 - Zagreb
Croatia 3 (Modric 47, Eduardo 55, 57)
Israel 1 (Hemed 44)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Velasco Carballo (Spa)
Croatia: Pletikosa - Strinic, Simunic, Lovren, Corluka (Dujmovic 46), Vukojevic (Eduardo 46), Jelavic (Kalinic 87), Srna, Modric, Mandzukic, Kranjcar.
Israel: Aouate (Haimov 46) - Ben Haim, Gershon, Kayal, Twatha, Hemed, Benayoun, Zahavi (Shechter 68), Khutaba, Ben Harush, T Cohen (Golasa 57).
Sent off: Ben Haim 51min.

Sep 6 - Riga
Latvia 1 (Cauna 19)
Greece 1 (K Papadopoulos 84)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Todorov (Bul)
Greece: Sifakis - Zaradoukas, Makos (Georgiadis 81), Vyntra (Maniatis 72), Papastathopoulos, K Papadopoulos, Fetfatzidis (Tziolis 46), Limberopoulos, Salpigidis, Karagounis, Samaras.

Sep 6 - Valletta
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 25)
Georgia 1 (Kankava 15)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Van Boekel (Hol)

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	8	6	1	1	16	5	19
Greece	8	5	3	0	10	4	18
Israel	9	4	1	4	11	11	13
Georgia	9	2	4	3	6	7	10
Latvia	8	2	2	4	7	10	8
Malta	8	0	1	7	4	17	1

Remaining games
07.10.11 Greece v Croatia
07.10.11 Latvia v Malta
11.10.11 Croatia v Latvia
11.10.11 Georgia v Greece
11.10.11 Malta v Israel

Group G

Sep 2 - Sofia
Bulgaria 0
England 3 (Cahill 13, Rooney 21, 45+1)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 36,521. **Ref:** De Bleeckere (Blg)
Bulgaria: Mihailov - Zanev, Bodurov, Milanov, Bandalovski (Sarmov 46), I Ivanov, Georgiev, M Petrov, S Petrov, I Popov (Marquinhos 81), Genkov (Bozhilov 61).
England: Hart - Smalling, Cahill, Terry, A Cole, Walcott (A Johnson 83), Parker, Barry (Lampard 80), Downing, Young (Milner 62), Rooney.

Sep 2 - Cardiff
Wales 2 (Morison 29, Ramsey 50)
Montenegro 1 (Jovetic 71)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,500. **Ref:** Banti (Ita)
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, Blake, Williams, Taylor, Ledley, Ramsey (Crofts 64), Vaughan, Bale (Earnshaw 90+4), Morison (Robson-Kanu 83), Bellamy.
Montenegro: M Bozovic - Balic (Jovanovic 83), Batak, Savic, Zverotic, Vukcevic, Pekovic, Drincic, Jovetic, Djalovic (Damjanovic 57), Vucinic (Delibasic 78).

Sep 6 - London
England 1 (Young 35)
Wales 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 77,128. **Ref:** Schorgenhofer (Aut)
England: Hart - Smalling, Terry, Cahill, A Cole, Milner, Lampard (Parker 73), Barry, Downing (A Johnson 79), Young, Rooney (Carroll 89).
Wales: Hennessey - Gunter, Williams, Blake, Taylor, Bale, Crofts, Collison (King 85), Ramsey, Ledley, Morison (Earnshaw 68).

Sep 6 - Basle
Switzerland 3 (Shaqiri 45+2, 62, 90)
Bulgaria 1 (I Ivanov 9)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 16,880. **Ref:** Kralovec (Cze)
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner, Djourou, Senderos, Ziegler, Shaqiri (Ben Khalifa 90+1), Inler, Dzemaili, Mehmedi (Emeghara 84), Xhaka (Fernandes 88), Derdiyok.
Bulgaria: Mihailov - Milanov, V Iliev, I Ivanov, Zanev, Georgiev, I Popov, S Petrov, Sarmov, M Petrov (Gadzhev 61), Genkov (Bodurov 70).
Sent off: Milanov 65min.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	7	5	2	0	15	3	17
Montenegro	6	3	2	1	5	3	11
Switzerland	6	2	2	2	10	8	8
Bulgaria	7	1	2	4	3	12	5
Wales	6	1	0	5	3	10	3

Remaining games
07.10.11 Montenegro v England
07.10.11 Wales v Switzerland
11.10.11 Bulgaria v Wales
11.10.11 Switzerland v Montenegro

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JAPAN

First cap for Havenaar

Ventforet Kofu striker Mike Havenaar, who was born in Japan to Dutch parents, made his international debut as a substitute in the 1-0 win over North Korea.

MALI

Keita back in the fold

Barcelona's Seydou Keita returned to the national side after a 20-month absence and helped Mali to leapfrog group leaders Cape Verde Islands with a 3-0 home win in their African Nations Cup qualifying group.

Keita last played for his country at the 2010 African Nations Cup finals in Angola and had previously resisted all requests from coach Alain Giresse to resume his international career.

ROMANIA

New arena opens

Visitors France earned a 0-0 draw in front of almost 50,000 people in the inaugural game at the new National Arena. The stadium in Bucharest will host this season's Europa League Final.

Opening ceremony...France and Romania in Bucharest's new stadium

Group H

Sep 2 - Nicosia
Cyprus 0
Portugal 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo pen 35, 83, Hugo Almeida 85, Danny 90+2)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rocchi (Ita)
Cyprus: Georgallides - Poursaitidis, Christou, Merkis, Avraam, Demetriou, Dobrasinovic, Christofi (Efraim 80), Makrides (Nikolaou 38), Charalambides (Alexandrou 63), Okkas.
Sent off: Dobrasinovic 34min.
Portugal: Rui Patricio - Joao Pereira, Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fabio Coentrao, Ruben Micael (Miguel Veloso 64), Raul Meireles, Joao Moutinho, Nani (Danny 85), Helder Postiga (Hugo Almeida 76), Cristiano Ronaldo.

Sep 2 - Oslo
Norway 1 (Abdellaoue pen 88)
Iceland 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 22,381. **Ref:** Hategan (Rom)
Norway: Jarstein - Hogli, Waehler, Hangeland, Ruud, Huseklepp (Brenne 87), Tettey, Hauger, Grindheim (Carew 80), Parr (Braaten 68), Abdellaoue.
Iceland: Magnusson - B Saevarsson, Ottesen, I Sigurdsson, Valgardsson, Danielsson (B Bjarnason 90), Jonsson (Thorsteinsson 80), R Gislason, Gudjohnsen, Johann Berg Gudmundsson, Sigthorsson (V Gunnarsson 78).

Sep 6 - Copenhagen
Denmark 2 (Bendtner 24, 44)
Norway 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Denmark: T Sorensen - Jacobsen, Kjaer, Agger, Boilesen, Zimling, Kvist, Rommedahl (Silberbauer 65), Eriksen, Krohn-Dehli (Schone 69), Bendtner (Pedersen 89).
Norway: Jarstein - Hogli, Waehler (Demidov 46), Hangeland, Ruud, Huseklepp (Carew 69), Tettey, Nordtveit, Grindheim, J A Riise (Braaten 61), Abdellaoue.

Sep 6 - Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (Sigthorsson 5)
Cyprus 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Jovanetic (Ser)

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	6	4	1	1	15	7	13
Denmark	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Norway	7	4	1	2	7	6	13
Iceland	7	1	1	5	3	9	4
Cyprus	6	0	2	4	5	13	2

Remaining games
07.10.11 Cyprus v Denmark
07.10.11 Portugal v Iceland
11.10.11 Denmark v Portugal
11.10.11 Norway v Cyprus

Group I

Sep 2 - Kaunas
Lithuania 0
Liechtenstein 0
Ref: Johnsen (Nor)
Sent off: E Cesnauskis (Lithuania) 75min

Sep 3 - Glasgow
Scotland 2 (Miller 45, D Fletcher 83)
Czech Republic 2 (Plasil 78, Kadlec pen 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 51,457. **Ref:** Blom (Hol)
Scotland: McGregor - Hutton, G Caldwell, Berra, Bardsley (Wilson 75), Naismith (Robson 86), D Fletcher, Adam (Cowie 79), Brown, Morrison, Miller.
Czech Republic: Lastuvka - Hubnik, Rajnoch, Sivok, Kadlec, Hubschman, Plasil, Petrzela (Rezek 56), Rosicky, Jiracek (Pekhart 77), Baros (Vacek 90+2).

Sep 6 - Glasgow
Scotland 1 (Naismith 50)
Lithuania 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Jakobsson (Ice)
Scotland: McGregor - Whittaker, Bardsley (Crainey 70), Berra, G Caldwell, Cowie, D Fletcher, Bannan (Snodgrass 84), Goodwillie, Morrison (Dorrans 79), Naismith.
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Semberas, Radavicius, Kijanskas (Danilevicius 61), Zaliukas, Sernas, Mikoliunas (Beniusis 77), Pilibaitis, Klimavicius, D Cesnauskis, Labukas (Novikovas 46).

Sep 6 - Logrono
Spain 6 (Negredo 33, 37, Xavi 44, Sergio Ramos 52, Villa 60, 79)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 16,000. **Ref:** Lechner (Aut)
Spain: Casillas - Sergio Ramos (Thiago 54), Busquets, Albiol, Arbeloa, Xavi (Fabregas 46), Xabi Alonso, Iniesta, Mata, Negredo (Llorente 61), Villa.
Liechtenstein: Jehle - Rechsteiner, Michael Stocklasa, Martin Stocklasa, Burgmeier, M Buchel (Kieber 81), Wieser (N Hasler 71), Ritzberger, Frick, T Beck (Hanselmann 87), D Hasler.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP I	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain (Q)	6	6	0	0	21	5	18
Czech Rep	6	3	1	2	8	5	10
Scotland	6	2	2	2	7	7	8
Lithuania	7	1	2	4	3	9	5
Liechtenstein	7	1	1	5	3	16	4

Remaining games
07.10.11 Czech Republic v Spain
08.10.11 Liechtenstein v Scotland
11.10.11 Lithuania v Czech Republic
11.10.11 Spain v Scotland

The 9 group winners and the runner-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups) qualify automatically for the finals. The 8 remaining runners-up will be drawn in 4 head-to-head, 2-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Poland and Ukraine qualify automatically

Q (in tables) = qualified

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Group A

Sep 3 - Bamako
Mali 3 (Diabate 27, 30, Mahamane Traore 50)
Cape Verde Islands 0
HT: 2-0

Sep 4 - Harare
Zimbabwe 3 (Katsande 16, Karuru 45, Billiat 85)
Liberia 0
HT: 2-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	5	3	0	2	7	4	9
Zimbabwe	5	2	2	1	6	3	8
Cape Verde	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Liberia	5	1	1	3	5	10	4

Remaining games
08.10.11 Cape Verde v Zimbabwe
08.10.11 Liberia v Mali

Group B

Sep 4 - Conakry
Guinea 1 (B Balde 32)
Ethiopia 0
HT: 1-0

Sep 4 - Antananarivo
Madagascar 0
Nigeria 2 (Yobo 68, Obinna 75)
HT: 0-0
Nigeria: Alyenugba - Echiejile, Okonkwo, Yobo, Ambrose, Mikel, Obi (Obasi 72), Obinna, Musa (Emenike 46), I Uche (Ogude 66), Anichebe.

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	5	4	1	0	11	3	13
Nigeria	5	3	1	1	10	3	10
Ethiopia	5	1	1	3	4	11	4
Madagascar	5	0	1	4	2	10	1

Remaining games
08.10.11 Ethiopia v Madagascar
08.10.11 Nigeria v Guinea

Group C

Sep 3 - Cairo, Egypt
Libya 1 (Al Lafi 30)
Mozambique 0
HT: 1-0

Sep 4 - Mitsamiouli
Comoros 1 (Mchangama 32)
Zambia 2 (C Katongo 23, Mayuka 87)
HT: 1-1

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	5	4	0	1	11	2	12
Libya	5	3	2	0	6	1	11
Mozambique	5	1	1	3	1	6	4
Comoros	5	0	1	4	2	11	1

Remaining games
08.10.11 Mozambique v Comoros
08.10.11 Zambia v Libya

Group D

Sep 3 - Dar Es Salaam
Tanzania 1 (Samata 22)
Algeria 1 (Bouazza 57)
HT: 1-0

Sep 4 - Bangui
Central African Republic 0
Morocco 0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	5	2	2	1	5	1	8
Cent Af Rep	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Tanzania	5	1	2	2	5	6	5
Algeria	5	1	2	2	3	8	5

Remaining games
08.10.11 Algeria v Cent Af Rep
08.10.11 Morocco v Tanzania

Group E

Sep 3 - Yaounde
Cameroon 5 (Kweuke 63, Andongcho 71, Eto'o pen 84, Choupo-Moting 90, 90+3)
Mauritius 0
HT: 0-0

Sep 3 - Dakar
Senegal 2 (Sow 33, 53)
DR Congo 0
HT: 1-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (Q)	5	4	1	0	14	2	13
Cameroon	5	2	2	1	9	3	8
DR Congo	5	2	1	2	8	8	7
Mauritius	5	0	0	5	2	20	0

Remaining games
08.10.11 DR Congo v Cameroon
08.10.11 Mauritius v Senegal

Group F

Sep 3 - Windhoek
Namibia 1 (Shipahu 83)
Gambia 0
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso (Q)	3	3	0	0	11	2	9
Gambia	3	1	0	2	4	5	3
Namibia	4	1	0	3	3	11	3

Mauritania withdrew before group games started

Remaining game
08.10.11 Gambia v Burkina Faso

Group G

Sep 3 - Freetown
Sierra Leone 2 (Suma 14, Bangura pen 89)
Egypt 1 (Mohsen 45)
HT: 1-1

Sep 4 - Niamey
Niger 2 (Kowa 10, Maazou 47)
South Africa 1 (Jali 47)
HT: 1-0
South Africa: Khune - Gould, Sangweni, Ngongca, Masilela, Jali, Tshabalala (Claasen 70), Modise, Khuboni, Parker (Khumalo 60), Serero (Majoro 46).

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Niger	5	3	0	2	6	5	9
South Africa	5	2	2	1	4	2	8
Sierra Leone	5	2	2	1	5	5	8
Egypt	5	0	2	3	2	5	2

Remaining games
08.10.11 Egypt v Niger
08.10.11 South Africa v Sierra Leone

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RUSSIA

Moscow is Final venue

Vitaly Mutko, the sports minister who chairs the country's organising committee for the 2018 World Cup, has revealed that Russia is likely to use 13 stadiums rather than the originally planned 16.

The FIFA ExCo member also revealed that Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium will host the Final and one semi-final, with the other semi taking place in St Petersburg, at Zenit's Petrovsky Stadium.

Final stadium...Luzhniki

SERBIA

Centurion concussed

Dejan Stankovic was taken to hospital at half-time during his 100th international appearance suffering with concussion. He suffered a knock midway through the first half in the Euro qualifier against the Faroes Islands and complained of feeling dizzy when in the dressing room at the interval.

"We are looking forward to his speedy recovery so we can have him back for the last two qualifiers, at home to Italy and away to Slovenia," said coach Vladimir Petrovic of the 32-year-old Internazionale midfielder. Milan Jovanovic, Zoran Tosic and Zdravko Kuzmanovic were on target for Serbia in a 3-1 win.

SOUTH AFRICA

Nations Cup hosts

The 2013 African Nations Cup, which was originally due to be staged in Libya, will now be held in South Africa. Libya will instead host the 2017 tournament.

Group H

Sep 3 - Kigali
Rwanda 0
Ivory Coast 5 (Kalou 29, Bony 36, 45, Ya Konan 68, Gervinho 83)
HT: 0-3

Sep 4 - Bujumbura
Burundi 1 (Faty 90)
Benin 1 (Akpagba 55)
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast (Q)	5	5	0	0	17	3	15
Burundi	5	1	2	2	6	7	5
Benin	5	1	2	2	8	10	5
Rwanda	5	1	0	4	4	15	3

Remaining games
08.10.11 Benin v Rwanda
08.10.11 Ivory Coast v Burundi

Group I

Sep 2 - Accra
Ghana 2 (Gyan 8, Agyemang-Badu 78)
Swaziland 0
HT: 1-0
Ghana: Kwarasey - Paintsil, Opare, Jonathan Mensah, Vorsah, Agyemang-Badu, Adiyiah, D Boateng, Gyan (Tagoe 41), Muntari (K Asamoah 46), A Ayew (Inkoom 75).

Sep 4 - Brazzaville
Congo 0
Sudan 1 (Abdelgadir 77)
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	5	4	1	0	11	1	13
Sudan	5	4	1	0	8	1	13
Congo	5	1	0	4	4	10	3
Swaziland	5	0	0	5	2	13	0

Remaining games
08.10.11 Sudan v Ghana
08.10.11 Swaziland v Congo

Group J

Sep 3 - Nairobi
Kenya 2 (Baraza 59, Oliech 90+3)
Guinea-Bissau 1 (De Carvalho 83)
HT: 0-0

Sep 4 - Luanda
Angola 2 (Manucho 57, Flavio Amado 73)
Uganda 0
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	5	3	1	1	6	2	10
Angola	5	3	0	2	5	5	9
Kenya	5	2	1	2	4	4	7
Guinea-Bissau	5	1	0	4	2	6	3

Remaining games
08.10.11 Guinea-Bissau v Angola
08.10.11 Uganda v Kenya

Group K

Sep 3 - Blantyre
Malawi 0
Tunisia 0

Sep 4 - Lome
Togo 1 (Arimiyaou 23)
Botswana 0
HT: 1-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana (Q)	8	5	2	1	7	3	17
Tunisia	7	3	2	2	12	6	11
Malawi	7	2	5	0	11	6	11
Togo	7	1	3	3	6	8	6
Chad	7	0	2	5	5	18	2

Remaining games
08.10.11 Chad v Malawi
08.10.11 Tunisia v Togo

The 11 group winners, the runner-up in Group K (the only 5-team group) and the 2 other runners-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st and 3rd in the respective groups) qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically

Q (in tables) = qualified

PACIFIC GAMES

In New Caledonia

Group A

Aug 27: Tuvalu 4 American Samoa 0; Solomon Islands 7 Guam 0; New Caledonia 5 Vanuatu 0.
Aug 30: Vanuatu 5 Tuvalu 1; American Samoa 0 Solomon Islands 4; Guam 0 New Caledonia 9.
Sep 1: American Samoa 0 Guam 2; Tuvalu 0 New Caledonia 8; Vanuatu 1 Solomon Islands 0.
Sep 3: Guam 1 Vanuatu 4; Solomon Islands 6 Tuvalu 1; New Caledonia 8 American Samoa 0.
Sep 5: Guam 1 Tuvalu 1; American Samoa 0 Vanuatu 8; Solomon Islands 2 New Caledonia 1.

PACIFIC GAMES – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Caledonia	5	4	0	1	31	2	12
Solomon Is	5	4	0	1	19	3	12
Vanuatu	5	4	0	1	18	7	12
Tuvalu	5	1	1	3	7	20	4
Guam	5	1	1	3	4	21	4
Am Samoa	5	0	0	5	0	26	0

Group B

Aug 27: Papua New Guinea 4 Cook Islands 0; Fiji 3 Tahiti 0.
Aug 30: Fiji 9 Kiribati 0; Tahiti 7 Cook Islands 0.
Sep 1: Cook Islands 3 Kiribati 0; Tahiti 1 Papua New Guinea 1.
Sep 3: Kiribati 1 Papua New Guinea 17; Cook Islands 1 Fiji 4.
Sep 5: Kiribati 1 Tahiti 17; Papua New Guinea 0 Fiji 2.

PACIFIC GAMES – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Fiji	4	4	0	0	18	1	12
Tahiti	4	2	1	1	25	5	7
Papua NG	4	2	1	1	22	4	7
Cook Islands	4	1	0	3	4	15	3
Kiribati	4	0	0	4	2	46	0

Top 2 in both groups qualified for semi-finals

Semi-finals

Sep 7 - Kone
New Caledonia 3 (Gope-Fenepej 89, 108, M Hmae 115)
Tahiti 1 (Poroiae 51)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Varman (Fij)
Sent off: Kabeu (New Caledonia) 55min

Sep 7 - Lifou
Solomon Islands 2 (Nawo 77, Fa'arodo pen 93)
Fiji 1 (Dunadamu 69)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Jacques (Tah)

3rd-place play-off

Sep 9 - Boulari
Tahiti 2 (Atani 5, L Tehau 65)
Fiji 1 (Avinesh 58)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Billion (NC)
Sent off: Rokotakala (Fiji) 43min

Final

Sep 9 - Noumea
New Caledonia 2 (Gope-Fenepej 9, Bako 11)
Solomon Islands 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Kerr (NZ)
New Caledonia: Dounezek - Joel Wakanumune, Lolohea, Wacalie, Bako, Wajoka (Vendegou 90+2), Ixoee, E Bearune, Gope-Fenepej (Kai 64), Dokunengo, Jean Wakanumune.
Solomon Islands: Ramoni - Faisi, Takayama (Joe 35), Sale, Totori, Beui, Ngava (Afengari 52), Naka, Iniga (Lui 71), Fa'arodo, Nawo.

FRIENDLIES

Sunday, August 14

Aug 14 - Monrovia
Liberia 0
Niger 0

Wednesday, August 17

Aug 17 - Navua
Fiji 3 (Krishna 29, Kainihewe 33, Dau 88)
Samoa 0
HT: 2-0

Aug 17 - Saida
Lebanon 2 (Maatouk 18, Ghaddar 71)
Syria 3 (Sahyouni 23, Al Sayed 79, Sabagh 83)
HT: 1-1

Thursday, August 18

Aug 18 - Suva
Fiji 5 (Krishna 2, 38, 51, Tiwa 61, 73)
Samoa 1 (Bell 53)
HT: 2-0

Friday, August 19

Aug 19 - Asmara
Eritrea 0
Sudan 3
HT: 0-2

Aug 19 - Doha
Qatar 0
Iraq 1 (Shakir 35)
HT: 0-1

Saturday, August 20

Aug 20 - San Cristobal
Dominican Republic 1 (Cruz 70)
Curacao 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vasquez (DmR)
Sent off: Victoria (Curacao) 69min

Aug 20 - Maseru
Lesotho 0
Swaziland 0

Sunday, August 21

Aug 21 - Bridgetown
Barbados 4 (Riviere Williams 35, Atkins 45, 56, Gibson 90)
St Lucia 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Skeete (Bds)

Aug 21 - San Cristobal
Dominican Republic 1 (Casanova 29)
Curacao 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Hidalgo (DmR)
Sent off: Zimmerman (Curacao) 89min

Aug 21 - Port of Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 3 (S John pen 19, Roberts 47, 85)
India 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)

Monday, August 22

Aug 22 - Surakarta
Indonesia 4 (Hariono 65, Gonzalez 70, Bambang 77, 85)
Palestine 1 (Obeid 49)
HT: 0-0

Aug 22 - Amman
Jordan 3 (Deeb 20, 52, Hayel 47)
Tunisia 3 (Jemal pen 30, pen 80, Chehoudi 33)
HT: 1-2

Aug 22 - Maseru
Lesotho 0
Swaziland 1 (Gina 30)
HT: 0-1

Wednesday, August 24

Aug 24 - Georgetown
Guyana 2 (Mills 19, Moore 62)
India 1 (Dias 36)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Lancaster (Guy)
Sent off: Henry (Guyana) 80min

Aug 24 - Bangkok
Thailand 0
Singapore 0

Thursday, August 25

Aug 25 - Al Ain City
United Arab Emirates 3 (Al Kamali pen 24, Khalil 50, 68)
Qatar 1 (Marcone 88)
HT: 1-0

Friday, August 26

Aug 26 - Osbourn
Antigua & Barbuda 1 (Skepple 11)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Robinson (Antigua & Barbuda)

Aug 26 - Riffa
Bahrain 1 (Abdullatif 25)
Sudan 0
HT: 1-0

Saturday, August 27

Aug 27 - Dundo
Angola 1 (Joao Martins 13)
DR Congo 2 (Bakongolia 41, Niemba 62)
HT: 1-1

Taken to hospital...Stankovic

SPAIN

Alcantara's decision

Barcelona midfielder Thiago Alcantara, whose father Mazinho was a World Cup winner with Brazil in 1994, has committed his future to Spain after making his competitive debut in the 6-0 Euro qualifying victory over Liechtenstein.

The 20-year-old, who was born in Italy, said: "It was a tricky decision because of my Brazilian heritage, but it was also logical given I've been playing for Spain since under-16 level."

TAJIKISTAN

Second chancers lose

Re-admitted after second-round opponents Syria were disqualified, Tajikistan lost their opening World Cup qualifying group games: 1-0 at home to Uzbekistan and 1-0 in North Korea.

Mind made up...Alcantara

103 international appearances for Xavi, making him Spain's most-capped outfield player

Aug 27 - Amman
Jordan 1 (Deeb 55)
Indonesia 0
HT: 0-0

Aug 27 - Muscat
Oman 1 (Al Hadari 64)
Kuwait 0
HT: 0-0

Sunday, August 28

Aug 28 - Osbourn
Antigua & Barbuda 2 (Dublin 45, J Thomas 89)
St Vincent & The Grenadines 2 (Richardson 21, S Samuel pen 55)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Charles (A&B)

Tuesday, August 30

Aug 30 - Gaborone
Botswana 1
Lesotho 2
HT: 0-2

Friday, September 2

Sep 2 - Quito
Ecuador 5 (J Ayovi 20, Suarez 38, Benitez 45, 50, Castillo 64)
Jamaica 2 (Cummings 56, Phillips 66)
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Buitrago (Col)
Ecuador: Bone - Paredes, Erazo, Caicedo, W Ayovi (Quiroz 70), Castillo (Bolanos 75), Saritama (Pita 75), Mendez (Mina 61), Suarez (Achilier 61), Benitez (Kaviedes 72), J Ayovi.
Jamaica: Miller - Thomas, Moodie (Smith 55), A Reid (Phinn 70), Phillips, Watson (Vernan 60), Austin (Edwards 55), Virgo, Damian Williams (Vanzie 80), Richards (R Johnson 46), Cummings.

Sep 2 - Panama City
Panama 0
Paraguay 2 (O Cardozo pen 7, Ramirez 11)
HT: 0-2
Panama: Mejia - Algandona, Rodriguez, Moreno (Chen 56), R Torres, Barahona (White 56), Gomez (A Henriquez 46), Cooper, De Gracia (Godoy 46), Perez (Polo 46), Tejada (Addies 46).
Paraguay: A Silva - Bonet (Piris 64), Da Silva, Veron, Vergara, Vera (Martinez 73), C Riveros (Oviedo 77), Estigarribia (Camacho 79), Perez, O Cardozo (Pittoni 64), Ramirez (Lopez 73).

Sep 2 - Lima
Peru 2 (Cruzado 36, Pizarro pen 79)
Bolivia 2 (Escobar 6, Cardozo 69)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Soto (Ven)
Peru: Butron - Guizasola (Corzo 46; Hurtado 74), Revoredo, Vilchez, Aguirre (Guevara 61), Balbin, Cruzado, Lobaton (Ballon 46), Yotun (Trujillo 46), Farfan (Avila 90), Pizarro.
Bolivia: Galarza - Vargas, Mendez, Rivero, Gutierrez, Chavez, Flores, Cardozo, Rojas (Robles 74), Escobar (Saucedo 62), Martins (Rios 90).

Sep 2 - Warsaw
Poland 1 (Pawel Brozek 27)
Mexico 1 (J Hernandez 35)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** Deaconu (Rom)
Poland: Tyton - Wasilewski, Glowacki, Jodlowiec (Gol 90), Wawrzyniak, Dudka, Matuszczyk (Gilk 71), Blaszczykowski (Malecki 46), A Mierzejewski (Rybus 67), Obraniak, Pawel Brozek (Peszko 84). *Sent off: Obraniak 70min.*
Mexico: Talavera - Juarez (Perez 74), F Rodriguez, Moreno, Salcido, Torrado, Molina (I Castro 82), Barrera, Naelson (G Dos Santos 65), Guardado, J Hernandez (De Nigris 46).

Sep 2 - St Gallen, Switzerland
Spain 3 (Iniesta 54, Fabregas 70, 90)
Chile 2 (Isla 10, Vargas 20)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 14,605. **Ref:** Laperriere (Swi)
Spain: Casillas (Reina 46) - Sergio Ramos, Javi Martinez, Albiol, Arbeloa, Xavi (Fabregas 63), Busquets, Xabi Alonso (Iniesta 46), Silva (Cazorla 79), Negredo (Fernando Torres 63), Villa (Pedro 46).
Chile: Bravo - Contreras, Vidal, Jara, Medel (Estrada 88), Isla (Meneses 83), Carmona, Beausejour (Gutierrez 78), Sanchez, Valdivia, Vargas (Seymour 57). *Sent off: Contreras 82min, Valdivia 90+1min.*

Sep 2 - Kharkiv
Ukraine 2 (Yarmolenko 1, Konoplianka 45)
Uruguay 3 (A Gonzalez 43, Lugano 59, Hernandez 87)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Butko, Kucher, Rakitskyi, Shevchuk, Tymoshchuk, Hai, Yarmolenko, Konoplianka (Kalinichenko 79), Voronin, Devic (Selezniov 59).
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano (Coates 71), Godin, Caceres, A Gonzalez (Hernandez 78), Perez (Gargano 62), Eguren, C Rodriguez (Ramirez 62), Suarez, Cavani.

Sep 2 - Carson
United States 0
Costa Rica 1 (Wallace 65)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,798. **Ref:** Molina (Hnd)
United States: Howard - Chandler, Orozco Fiscal, Bocanegra, Castillo, Edu, Donovan, Torres, Rogers (Kljestan 66), Altidore (Agudelo 63), Shea.
Costa Rica: Navas - Johnson (Salvatierra 82), Umana, Acosta, Miller, J Martinez (Colindres 46), Barrantes (Mena 87), Azofeifa, Sanchez (Mclean 79), Saborio, Brenes (Wallace 61).

Sep 2 - Kolkata, India
Venezuela 0
Argentina 1 (Otamendi 72)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 90,000. **Ref:** Nair (Ind)
Venezuela: Romo - Rosales, Vizcarrondo, Amorebieta (Tunez 90), Cichero, Feltscher (Orozco 71), A Flores, Rincon, C Gonzalez (Zambrano 89), S Rondon, Fedor.
Argentina: Romero - Zabaleta (Fernandez 84), Demichelis, Otamendi, Rojo, L Gonzalez (Sosa 74), Mascherano, Alvarez (Pastore 62), Messi, Higuain (Aguero 78), Di Maria.

Saturday, September 3

Sep 3 - Bobo Dioulasso
Burkina Faso 1 (Alain Traore 61)
Equatorial Guinea 0
HT: 0-0

Sep 3 - Harrison, USA
Honduras 0
Colombia 2 (Gutierrez pen 23, 72)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Gonzalez (USA)
Honduras: N Valladares - Sabillon (Lalin 77), Bernardez, Leveron, Figueroa, Delgado (Acevedo 83), Garcia, Thomas, M Martinez (M Chavez 59), Bengtson (Najar 70), Costly. *Sent off: Thomas 51min.*
Colombia: Ospina - Zuniga, L Perea, A Mosquera, Armero, Guarin, Sanchez (Bolivar 82), Ramos, D Moreno (Cuadrado 74), Gutierrez (Rodallega 77), J Martinez (Marrugo 61). *Sent off: Ramos 54min.*

Sunday, September 4

Sep 4 - El Prat de Llobregat, Spain
Mexico 1 (Guardado 79)
Chile 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Muniz Fernandez (Spa)
Mexico: G Ochoa - Marquez, Perez, Duenas, Velarde (Guardado 66), I Castro, Zavala, Alderete (Salcido 77), Bermudez, De Nigris (J Hernandez 46), G Dos Santos (Torrado 86).
Chile: Bravo (Pinto 46) - Vilchez, Acevedo (Medel 46), Aceval, Aranguiz (Isla 67), Vidal, Seymour (Beausejour 61), Estrada, Cordova, Orellana (Vargas 61), Rubio (Sanchez 39).

Monday, September 5

Sep 5 - La Paz
Bolivia 0
Peru 0
Ref: Quintana (Par)
Bolivia: D Vaca - Parada, Raldes, Rivero, Gutierrez (Saucedo 60), Flores (Chumacero 77), Robles, Cardozo, J Vaca (Chavez 81), Arce, Martins (Pena 46).
Peru: Butron - Corzo (Revoredo 46), Ramos, Acasiete, Yotun, Retamozo, Lobaton (Ballon 75), Marino (Trujillo 67), Hurtado (Aguirre 58), Advincula (Guevara 80), Avila (Pizarro 89).

Sep 5 - London
Brazil 1 (Leandro Damiao 44)
Ghana 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Dean (Eng)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Daniel Alves, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Marcelo, Lucas Leiva, Fernandinho (Hulk 46), Ganso (Elias 10), Neymar, Ronaldinho, Leandro Damiao (Alexandre Pato 78).
Ghana: Kwarasey - Paintsil, Jonathan Mensah, Vorsah, Opare, Inkoom (Tagoe 86), Agyemang-Badu (Adomah 78), D Boateng (L Addy 46), Muntari (Rabiu 46), K Asamoah (Annan 66), J Ayew (Adiyiah 70). *Sent off: Opare 34min.*

Tuesday, September 6

Sep 6 - Dhaka, Bangladesh
Argentina 3 (Higuain 25, Di Maria 26, Echiejile og 65)
Nigeria 1 (Obasi 46)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Bakhshizadeh (Irn)
Argentina: Romero - Burdisso, Demichelis, Otamendi, Zabaleta (Fernandez 83), Mascherano, Rojo (J Gutierrez 69), Sosa (Alvarez 90), Di Maria (Banega 77), Messi, Higuain (Aguero 77).

Sep 6 - Brussels
Belgium 1 (Lombaerts 55)
United States 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 21,946. **Ref:** Collum (Sco)
Belgium: Mignolet - Ciman, Alderweireld, Kompany, Lombaerts, Simons, Hazard (Ogunjimi 63), Witsel, Fellaini (Hubert 63), Mertens, De Camargo (Lukaku 63).
United States: Howard - Cherundolo, Goodson, Bocanegra, Chandler, Edu, Torres (Larentowicz 76), Dempsey, Rogers (Beckerman 46), Altidore (Agudelo 46), Shea.

Sep 6 - Prague
Czech Republic 4 (Kadlec pen 4, 12, Rezek 47, Kolar 50)
Ukraine 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 7,322. **Ref:** Trutz (Sln)
Czech Republic: Drobny - Pospech (Gebre Selassie 60), Sivok, Kadlec, Pudil, Hubschman, Rezek (Petrzela 71), Plasil, Kolar (Vacek 68), Pilar, Pekhart (Lafata 58).
Ukraine: Dykan - Butko, Kucher, Kryvtsov, Shevchuk (Fedetskyi 76), Tymoshchuk, Hai (Rakitskyi 46), Yarmolenko (Kalinichenko 86), Konoplianka (Voronin 52), Milevskyi (Selezniov 57), Devic (Shynder 80).

Sep 6 - Quito
Ecuador 4 (Suarez 21, J Ayovi 27, Castillo 59, Benitez 75)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 2-0
Ecuador: Bone - Paredes, G Caicedo, Erazo, W Ayovi (Calderon 80), Suarez (Mendez 73), Bolanos (Quiroz 68), Castillo, Saritama (De la Torre 82), J Ayovi (Kaviedes 79), Benitez (Delgado 87).
Costa Rica: Navas - Corrales, Miller (Meneses 14), Johnson, Acosta, Azofeifa, Mclean (Guzman 67), Wallace (Sanchez 54), Barrantes (Mena 80), Parks (J Martinez 87), Colindres (Guevara 61).

Sep 6 - Cannes, France
Gabon 1 (Ecuele Manga 44)
Niger 0
HT: 1-0

Sep 6 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 0
Paraguay 3 (Camacho 30, O Cardozo 86, 90+3)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
Honduras: N Valladares - Bernardez (Murillo 46), Leveron, Figueroa, Sabillon, Delgado, Garcia (M Martinez 81), M Chavez (Portillo 27), Najar (Peralta 46), Bengtson (Rojas 81), Vega (Lalin 46).
Paraguay: J Silva (A Silva 67) - Piris, Da Silva, Veron, Marecos, Vera (Mendoza 46), V Caceres (Perez 61), C Riveros (Estigarribia 75), Camacho (Pittoni 51), Ramirez (O Cardozo 61), Lopez.

Sep 6 - Fort Lauderdale, USA
Jamaica 0
Colombia 2 (Gutierrez 54, J Martinez 90)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Dellavia (USA)
Jamaica: Miller - J Taylor, Thomas, Virgo (Morrison 62), Damian Williams, Austin (Moodie 63), Stevens, Phillips, Richards, R Johnson (O Daley 69), Cummings.
Colombia: Ospina - Zuniga, L Perea, A Mosquera, Armero, Sanchez, Guarin, D Moreno (Rodallega 66), Marrugo, Gutierrez (Bolivar 76), Falcao (J Martinez 82).

Sep 6 - Gdansk
Poland 2 (R Lewandowski 55, Blaszczykowski pen 90+1)
Germany 2 (Kroos pen 68, Cacau 90+4)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Orsato (Ita)
Poland: Szczesny - Wasilewski, Perquis (Glik 72), Glowacki, Wawrzyniak, Murawski, Dudka, Blaszczykowski (Pawlowski 90+4), A Mierzejewski (Rybus 84), Peszko (Matuszczyk 65), R Lewandowski (Pawel Brozek 80). *Sent off: Glowacki 81min.*
Germany: Wiese - Trasch, Mertesacker, Boateng, Lahm (Schmelzer 46), Rolfes (Bender 77), Schurrle, Gotze, Kroos, Podolski (Muller 60), Klose (Cacau 46).

Sep 6 - Caracas
Venezuela 2 (Maldonado pen 26, pen 39)
Guinea 1 (A Camara pen 79)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Gambeta (Per)
Venezuela: Morales - A Gonzalez, Rey, Tunez, Granados, Lucena, Di Giorgi (A Flores 84), Orozco (R Gonzalez 77), Chourio (Zambrano 89), Maldonado (Feltscher 77), Moreno (Aristeguieta 68).

Wednesday, September 7

Sep 7 - Malabo
Equatorial Guinea 3 (Randy pen 20, Itondo 44, 83)
Central African Republic 0
HT: 2-0

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CHAMPIONS LEAGUE UPDATE

CYPRUS APOEL Nicosia

THE COACH

Ivan JOVANOVIC (Ser)
Age 49 (08.07.62)
This will be his second Champions League group-stage campaign with the club. Voted the island's coach of the season four times.

(All ages as of 01.08.11)

GOALKEEPERS

Dionisis CHIOTIS (Gre)
Age 34 (04.06.77)
Has become a cult hero at APOEL since being shown the door by AEK Athens.

Panos CONSTANTINOU
Age 25 (01.11.85)
Signed from AEL in May 2010 and won a championship medal in his first season.

Plus: Urko **PARDO** (Blg; Age 28, 28.01.83)

Split brings even greater success to the club

GSP Stadium...the largest ground in Cyprus has a capacity of 22,859

Founded in Nicosia in 1926 as a football and athletics club, APOEL have won more Cypriot championships (21) than any other club on the island, boasting one more than city rivals Omonia.

The key moment in their history came in 1997 when, sparked into action by mounting debt and the effects of the Bosman ruling, a decision was made to create APOEL FC Ltd, separating the interests of the football team from those of the sports club. With a sounder financial base to work from and greater professionalism, the team have gone from strength to strength, enjoying huge success in the new millennium, winning five league titles and this year reaching the Champions League group stage for the second time.

DEFENDERS

William BOAVENTURA (Bra)
Age 31 (14.02.80)
Left-back bought from Metalurh Donetsk a year ago. APOEL fans have now forgiven him for his past career with rivals Anorthosis.

Sanel JAHIC (Bos)
Age 29 (10.12.81)
Bosnia international centre-back or midfield enforcer, born in France and acquired from AEK Athens this summer.

KAKA (Bra)
Age 30 (16.05.81)
Centre-back signed this summer on a season-long loan from Hertha Berlin. Helped Braga reach last season's Europa League Final.

Marcelo OLIVEIRA (Bra)
Age 30 (05.09.81)
Centre-back who played for Corinthians and Gremio, then spent five years with Atromitos before moving to APOEL this summer.

PAULO JORGE (Por)
Age 31 (16.06.80)
Central defender who joined in 2009 after a decade with home-town club Braga.

Savvas POURSAITIDIS (Gre)
Age 35 (23.06.76)
Once good enough to play for top Greek club Olympiakos, the combative right-back has spent the past nine years in Cypriot football. Traded his Greek passport for a Cypriot one in 2009.

Plus: Marios **ANTONIADES** (Age 21, 14.05.90), Marios **ELIA** (Age 32, 14.04.79)

TACTICS

Jovanovic's side generally adheres to a safety-first, counter-attacking style and their well-drilled, six-man defensive shield is difficult to break down. They will also be motivated by a desire to dedicate this season to centre-back Christos Kontis, who suffered a minor heart attack on the opening weekend of the current campaign and had to retire.

4-2-3-1

Chiotis; Jahic, Paulo Jorge; Poursaitidis, Boaventura; Nuno Morais, Helio Pinto; Charalambidis, Marcinho, Manduca; Ailton

MIDFIELDERS

Tijani BELAID (Tun)
Age 24 (06.09.87)
Recently signed Paris-born Tunisia international. Has previous Champions League experience with Slavia Prague.

Constantinos CHARALAMBIDIS
Age 30 (25.07.81)
His corners and set-pieces are vital. Besides two stints at APOEL, he has also played for PAOK, Panathinaikos and Carl Zeiss Jena.

HELIO PINTO (Por)
Age 27 (29.02.84)
Comfortable out wide, as a playmaker or in the holding role. Failed to make the grade at Benfica and Sevilla.

MARCINHO (Bra)
Age 30 (23.03.81)
Playmaker who spent the bulk of his career with Madeiran club Maritimo before joining last year.

NUNO MORAIS (Por)
Age 27 (29.01.84)
Capable of operating in midfield or central defence. Was on Chelsea's books in the early part of the Jose Mourinho era.

Marinos SATSIAS
Age 33 (24.05.78)
Trusty defensive midfielder and club captain. In 16 seasons at APOEL he has won six championships.

Plus: Nektarios **ALEXANDROU** (Age 27, 19.12.83), Evgenios **ANTONIOU** (Age 20, 07.12.90), Emilios **PANAYIOTOU** (Age 18, 22.09.92)

FORWARDS

Aldo ADORNO (Par)
Age 29 (08.04.82)
Right-winger or attacking midfielder who joined APOEL from Apollon in June. Has also played in his homeland, Mexico, Israel and Spain.

AILTON (Bra)
Age 27 (20.08.84)
Previously with Orgryte and Copenhagen, he joined APOEL 12 months ago and was voted Cyprus' Player of the Year in his first season.

Gustavo MANDUCA (Bra)
Age 31 (08.06.80)
Talented left-winger who has played in five countries: his homeland, Finland, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus – his home for the past year.

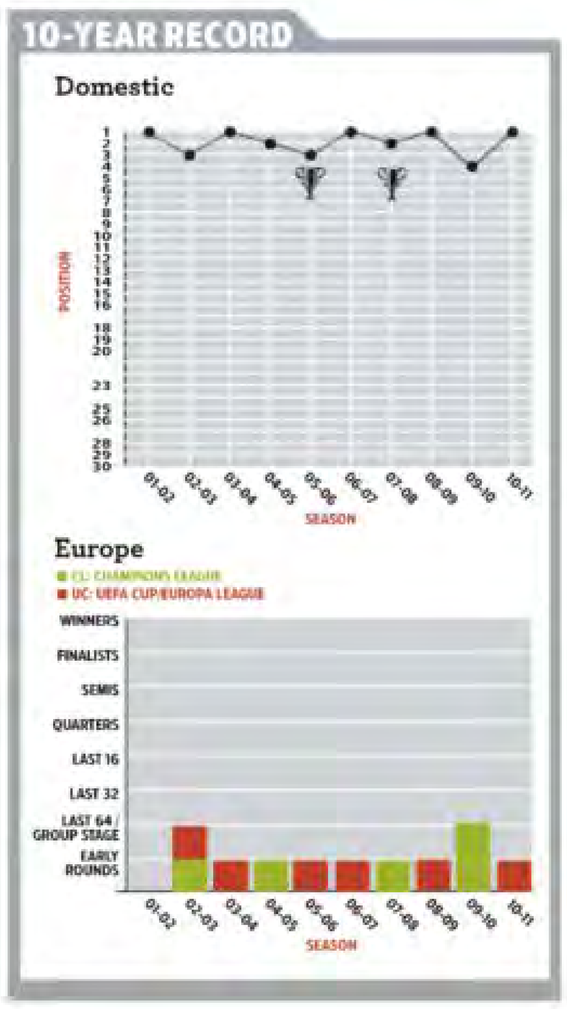
Esteban SOLARI (Arg)
Age 31 (02.06.80)
Brother of ex-Argentina and Real Madrid midfielder Santiago Solari, he is in his second spell as the focal point of the APOEL attack.

Athos SOLOMOU
Age 25 (30.11.85)
Right-winger who is also able to do a steady job as a full-back. First made his name at Limassol outfit Apollon.

Ivan TRICKOVSKY (Mac)
Age 24 (18.04.87)
Left-winger or striker bought by APOEL in 2010 after playing against them for Red Star Belgrade.

Plus: Achilleas **VASILIOU** (Age 20, 08.04.91)

10-YEAR RECORD



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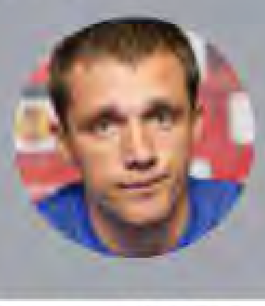
BELARUS

BATE Borisov

THE COACH

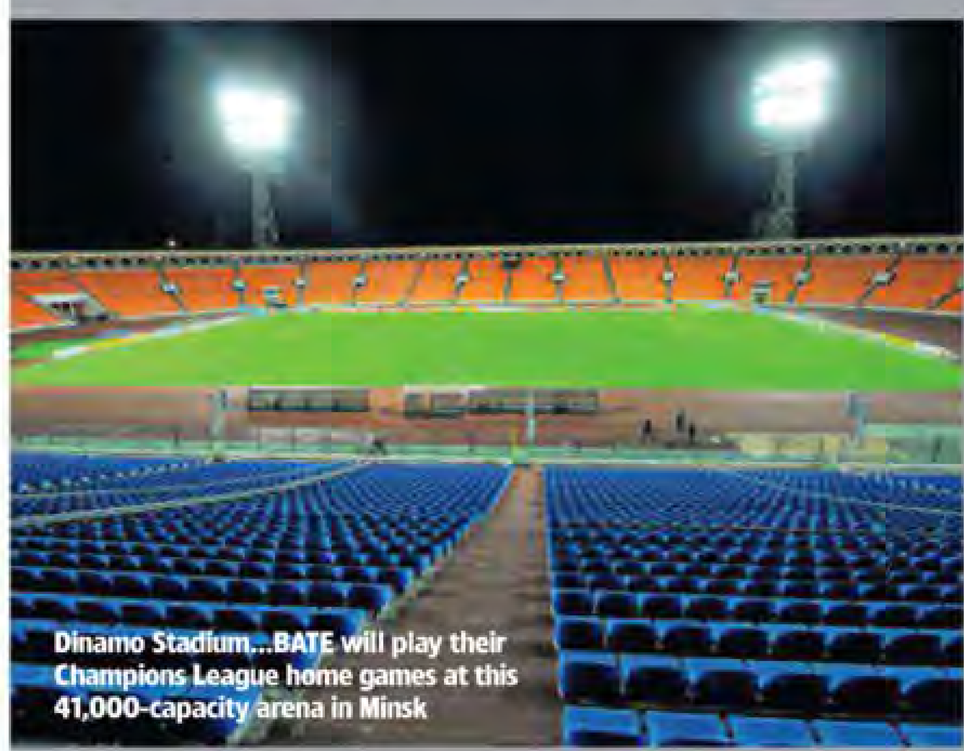


Viktor GONCHARENKO

Age 34 (10.06.77)
The son of an engineer at the Chernobyl nuclear plant who died soon after the disaster there. Took over BATE in 2007 aged only 30.

(All ages as of 23.09.11)

Academy graduates keep BATE ahead at home



Dinamo Stadium...BATE will play their Champions League home games at this 41,000-capacity arena in Minsk

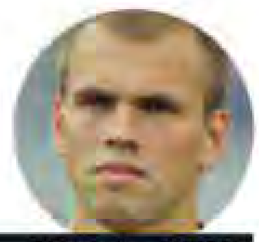
The dominant club in Belarus since 2006, winning five successive Supreme League titles, BATE's progress from the works team of an automobile and electric equipment company to Champions League group stage participants in the space of 25 years is extraordinary.

Young coach Victor Goncharenko has been the main figure behind the club's rise, creating a well-balanced side that includes many graduates from the youth academy. More were promoted this summer – following the departures of goalkeeper Sergey Veremko to Russia's Krylia Sovietov and right-back Igor Shitaw, who joined Dynamo Moscow – but it's business as usual as they currently lead their domestic league by nine points from Skakhtyor Salihorsk.

GOALKEEPERS

Pavel CHESNOVSKI

Age 25 (04.03.86)
Former youth-team player who returned to BATE this year after spells at MTZ-RIPO, Vitebsk and Latvia's Ventspils.



Alexander GUTOR

Age 22 (18.04.89)
Graduate of the club's academy and a Belarus under-21 international.

Plus: Andrey **SHCHARBAKOV** (Age 20, 31.01.91)

DEFENDERS

Maxim BORDACHEV

Age 25 (18.05.86)
Joined BATE in 2009 from MTZ-RIPO. Tall, right-sided defender who is effective in the air. Current Belarus international.

Egor FILIPENKO

Age 23 (10.04.88)
Central defender who returned to the club in 2002 after three seasons in Russia. Reliable in the air but not the quickest.

Yawhen KUNTSEVICH

Age 23 (16.08.88)
Promising left-sided defender signed this year from Belshina. Good reader of the game and a tough competitor.

Artyom RADKOV

Age 26 (26.08.85)
Returned from Dnepr Mogilev in 2001, the stopper was named the league's best player in 2007.

Marco SIMIC (Ser)

Age 24 (16.06.87)
Central defender signed from Jagodina this year after spells in Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary.

Alexander YUREVICH

Age 32 (08.08.79)
Vastly experienced Belarus international left-back. Signed in 2008 from Karpaty Lviv of Ukraine.

MIDFIELDERS

Dzmitry BAGA

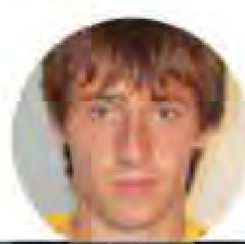
Age 21 (04.01.90)
Holding midfielder promoted to the first-team squad from the academy. Under-21 international.

Mikhail GORDEICHUK

Age 21 (23.10.89)
Signed this year after impressing for Naftan.

Dmitri LIKHTAROVICH

Age 33 (01.03.78)
Holding midfielder signed from Dnepr Mogilev in 2001. Won seven Belarus titles.



Aleh PATOTSKY

Age 20 (24.06.91)
Quick left-winger who has been promoted from the club academy.

Alexander PAVLOV

Age 27 (18.08.84)
Recruited to BATE from Dnepr Mogilev in 2009.

RENAN BRESSAN

Age 22 (03.11.88)
Creative midfielder who was the league's top scorer in 2010. Born in Brazil but now eligible to play for Belarus after receiving citizenship.

Plus: Kiril **ALEKSIYAN** (Arm; Age 20, 22.01.91), Pavel **NEKHAICHIK** (Age 23, 15.07.88), Edgar **OLEKHNOVICH** (Age 24, 17.05.87)

FORWARDS

Mateja KEZMAN (Ser)

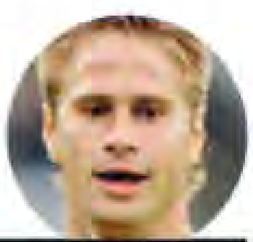
Age 32 (12.04.79)
Former Serbia international signed in September from South China. Has played for several top European clubs, including Atletico Madrid and Chelsea.

Artem KONTSEVOY

Age 28 (20.05.83)
First played for BATE in 2001. He returned to the club in 2010 from Russian side Spartak Nalchik and has proved effective as a target man.

Vitali RODIONOV

Age 28 (11.12.83)
Belarus international who returned in 2009 from Freiburg. Irreplaceable up front with excellent passing skills. Named the league's top forward in 2010.



Maxim SKAVYSH

Age 21 (13.11.89)
A graduate of the BATE academy, he is a Belarus under-21 international who is blessed with speed, good vision and scoring talent.

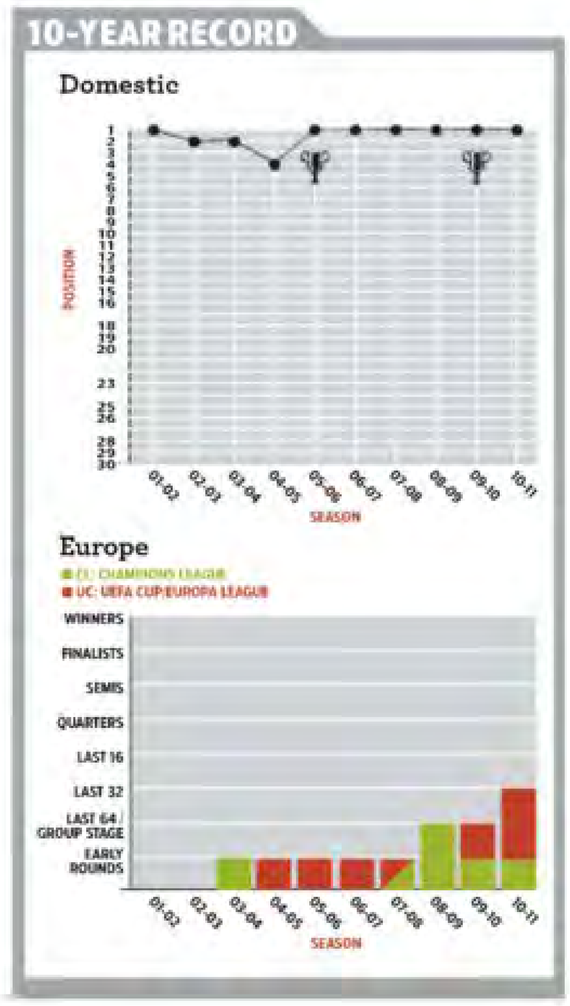
Plus: ALEX Porfirio (Bra; Age 23, 29.05.88)

TACTICS

Midfield is the team's biggest strength, where the energetic Baga and skilful Renan Bressan combine to good effect. Belarus internationals Rodionov and Kontsevoy work hard up front, but Goncharenko will now have to find a place in his starting line-up for experienced Serbian striker Kezman.

4-4-2

10-YEAR RECORD



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CROATIA

Dinamo Zagreb

THE COACH

Krunoslav JURCIC
Age 41 (26.11.69)
Returned this summer for a second spell as coach. Helped Croatia to third place at the 1998 World Cup.

(All ages as of 23.09.11)

Home dominance remains Dinamo's chief objective

Maksimir Stadium...Dinamo's home can accommodate just under 40,000 fans

Much to the annoyance of domestic arch-rivals Hajduk Split, the Blues of Dinamo Zagreb are the most successful, wealthiest and politically-favoured club in Croatia.

The winners of the last six national titles, and recipients 13 times in the past two decades, preserving this hegemony remains Dinamo's top priority, although the prospect of taking part in the Champions League group stage for the first time in 11 years has prompted no end of anticipation.

Dinamo are the only Croat side ever to have won a continental trophy - the Fairs Cup in 1967 - and even though no one expects similar progress this time around, a scalp or two would do very nicely indeed for the club's supporters.

GOALKEEPERS

Ivan KELAVA
Age 23 (20.02.88)
Academy product who has finally established himself as a first choice. More than 50 caps for Croatia at various youth levels.

Filip LONCARIC
Age 25 (17.09.86)
With Dinamo from the age of eight, he has mostly had to make do with the role of back-up.

DEFENDERS

Leandro CUFRE (Arg)
Age 33 (09.05.78)
A popular figure because of his total commitment, the left-back previously played for Roma, Monaco and Hertha Berlin.

Josip SIMUNIC
Age 33 (18.02.78)
The marquee signing of the close season. Tall, strong and mobile central defender or left-back was brought in from Hoffenheim.

Ivan TOMECAK
Age 21 (07.12.89)
Dynamic right-sided full-back or midfielder. The Croatia under-21 has promise but is injury prone.

TONEL (Por)
Age 31 (13.04.80)
Gritty Portugal international centre-back who came through the Porto youth ranks, but made his name with Sporting Lisbon.

Domagoj VIDA
Age 22 (29.04.89)
Rugged central defender or right-back. Returned to his homeland this summer after 12 unhappy months at Bayer Leverkusen.

Sime VRSALJKO
Age 19 (10.01.92)
Up-and-coming home-grown right-back. Banned for the first three group games after a red card against Malmo.

Plus: Walid **ATTA** (Swe; Age 25, 28.08.86), Igor **BISCAN** (Age 33, 04.05.78), Luis **IBANEZ** (Arg; Age 23, 15.07.88), Dino **SKVORC** (Age 21, 02.02.90)

MIDFIELDERS

Milan BADELJ
Age 22 (25.02.89)
Club vice-captain, he combines flair with versatility, high energy and a surprising amount of perseverance.

Adrian CALELLO (Arg)
Age 24 (15.05.87)
The defensive midfielder has been patrolling in front of Dinamo's back-four since December 2008.

Mateo KOVACIC
Age 17 (06.05.94)
Creator whose dribbling ability and imagination have led the local press to draw comparisons with the likes of Messi and Rooney.

Jerko LEKO
Age 31 (09.04.80)
Hard running right-sided midfielder who returned this summer after spells at Dynamo Kiev, Monaco and Bucaspor.

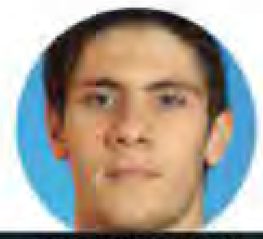
Nikola POKRIVAC
Age 25 (26.11.85)
Adaptable midfield holder, left-back or stopper. Returned to Dinamo in June following spells at Monaco and Salzburg.

SAMMIR (Bra)
Age 24 (23.04.87)
Skilful attacking midfielder who, after five years with Dinamo, is thinking of taking up Croat citizenship.

Plus: Arijan **ADEMI** (Age 20, 29.05.91), Mehmed **ALISPAHIC** (Bos; Age 23, 24.11.87), Pedro **MORALES** (Chl; Age 26, 25.05.85)

FORWARDS

Fatos BECIRAJ (Mne)
Age 23 (05.05.88)
An ethnic Albanian, he is a Montenegro international who wants to represent Kosovo one day. Signed from Buducnost in 2010.

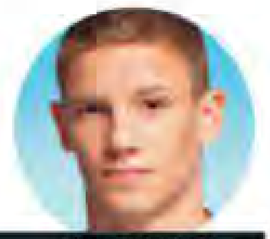


Andrej KRAMARIC
Age 20 (19.06.91)
Club record scorer at schoolboy and junior level with 450 goals. Made his first-team debut two years ago.

Ivan KRSTANOVIC
Age 28 (06.01.83)
Gangling striker acquired in the summer from crosstown rivals NK Zagreb.

Ante RUKAVINA
Age 25 (18.06.86)
Former Hajduk Split and Panathinaikos front man who has struggled to live up to the hype of his early career.

Mario SITUM
Age 19 (04.04.92)
The subject of rave reviews since breaking into the first-team early this year. Reportedly coveted by Premier League clubs.



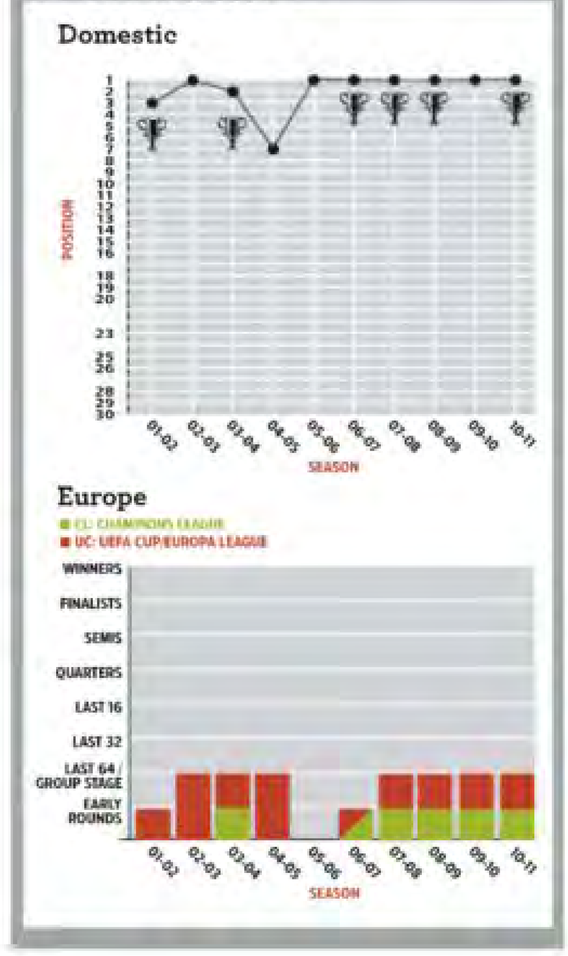
Dino SPEHAR
Age 17 (08.02.94)
Recently signed from Osijek, he is the son of ex-Croatia striker Robert Spehar.

Plus: Jakub **SYLVESTER** (Slk; Age 22, 02.02.89)

TACTICS

Unlike the rigid and defence-orientated strategy of Vahid Halilhodzic, who was his predecessor at the Maksimir, Jurcic has attempted to introduce a more academic and enterprising style of play. However, the use of a midfield diamond can often leave Dinamo starved of width.

10-YEAR RECORD



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CZECH REPUBLIC

Viktoria Plzen

THE COACH

Pavel VRBA

Age 47 (06.12.63)
Since his appointment in 2008 he has taken the club to victory in the Czech Cup in 2010 and their first national title last season.

(All ages as of 23.09.11)

Riches and new adventures await competition debutants

Synot Tip Arena...Viktoria will use the 21,000-capacity stadium in Prague for their home matches

For the bulk of their 100-year existence, Viktoria have been the epitome of underachievement, an ordinary outfit from head to toe. But how the west Bohemian outfit have transformed that perception in the past 12 months, claiming their first Czech league title last spring and subsequently earning the right to a Champions League baptism, which will surely be their priority this term.

Not only will Viktoria be energised by a rare continental challenge and the prospect of facing Barcelona and Milan, their adventure also offers the club financial resources they once could only dream of. Just for reaching the group stages, they will rake in £8.25million, a veritable fortune for a club with an annual budget hovering around the £2.9m mark.

GOALKEEPERS

Marek CECH

Age 35 (08.04.76)
Has played in the Czech and Slovak leagues, as well as for Luch-Energiya Vladivostok and Lokomotiv Moscow.

Michal DANEK

Age 28 (06.07.83)
In his second spell at Viktoria, he spent 2008 in England on loan to West Bromwich Albion.

Plus: Roman **PAVLIK** (Age 35, 17.01.76)

DEFENDERS

Milos BREZINSKY (Slk)

Age 27 (02.04.84)
Tall and commanding centre-back who helped Slovakia under-19s to third-place at the Euros in 2002.

David BYSTRON

Age 28 (18.11.82)
Centre-back or defensive midfielder who reads the game well and is good in the air. A Bulgarian champion with Levski Sofia in 2009.

Marian CISOVSKY (Slk)

Age 31 (02.11.79)
Slovakia international central defender or right-back bought this summer from Romanian side Politehnica Timisoara.

David LIMBERSKY

Age 27 (06.10.83)
Quick, attacking wing-back who is capable of lining up on either flank. Had a spell on loan to Tottenham Hotspur.

Frantisek RAJTORAL

Age 25 (12.03.86)
Talented right-back who can also play in midfield. A Czech youth and under-21 international.

Frantisek SEVINSKY

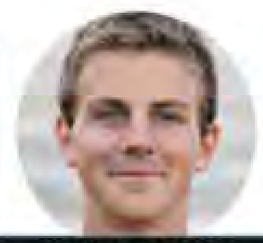
Age 32 (31.03.79)
Reliable right-back signed from Mlada Boleslav in 2009. A graduate of the Bohemians academy in Prague.

Plus: Radim **REZNIK** (Age 22, 20.01.89)

TACTICS

Whether using a 4-2-3-1 line-up or a 4-1-4-1 as Plan B, Vrba principally demands two things from his players: that they love going forward at pace and that they are comfortable on the ball. Key to their plan is the speed with which the attacking midfielders flood forward in support of lone striker Bakos.

MIDFIELDERS



Vladimir DARIDA

Age 21 (08.08.90)
Promising right-sided midfielder who spent the second-half of last season on loan at Czech second division side Banik Sokolov.

Pavel HORVATH

Age 36 (22.04.75)
Playmaker whose passing and set-pieces are crucial. Previously with Sparta and Slavia Prague, Galatasaray and Sporting Lisbon.

Petr JIRACEK

Age 25 (02.03.86)
Left-footer who is as happy battling in the trenches as he is pushing forward. International debut in a recent Euro 2012 qualifier in Scotland.

Daniel KOLAR

Age 25 (27.10.85)
Intelligent attacking midfielder or front man. Another of the ex-Sparta Prague brigade, he was voted Young Czech Player of the Year in 2006.

Milan PETRZELA

Age 28 (19.06.83)
Busy, technical and incisive right-sided midfielder who has grown in confidence since arriving in Plzen from Sparta Prague in 2007.

Petr TRAPP

Age 25 (06.12.85)
The player who Vrba calls on when he needs extra muscle in the engine room. Earned his first full cap for the Czech Republic in the Kirin Cup in June.

Plus: Martin **SLADKY** (Age 19, 01.03.92), David **STIPEK** (Age 19, 31.05.92)

FORWARDS

Marek BAKOS (Slk)

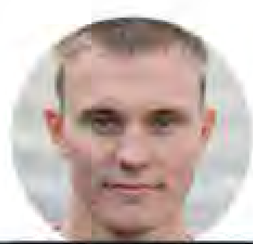
Age 28 (15.04.83)
Six goals in five Champions League qualifiers this season. Had a spell in Russia with Shinnik Yaroslavl in 2006.

Michal DURIS (Slk)

Age 23 (01.06.88)
Ever-willing front runner who is often used as a sub. Capped by his country at under-19 and under-21 level.

Martin FILLO

Age 25 (07.02.86)
Attacking all-rounder who used to skipper the Czech under-21s. Returned to Plzen this year after two seasons in Norway with Viking.

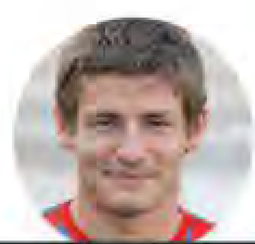


Jakub HORA

Age 20 (23.02.91)
Left-winger signed in the close season from Slavia Prague. Ex-Czech under-19 international.

Michael KRMENCIK

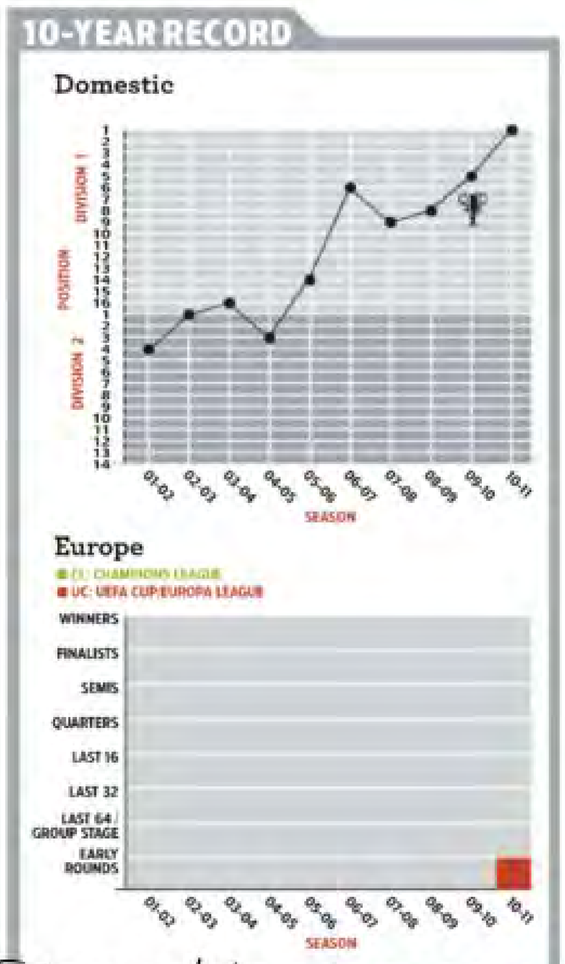
Age 18 (15.03.93)
Pacy and versatile, he always offers urgency and commitment when coming off the bench. Signed from Banik Sokolov three years ago.



Vaclav PILAR

Age 22 (13.10.88)
Live wire recently signed on loan from Hradec Kralove. Won his first full cap for the Czech Republic in June against Peru.

10-YEAR RECORD



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TURKEY

Trabzonspor

THE COACH

Senol GUNES
Age 49 (01.06.62)
Back at his home-town club after a spell in South Korea. Guided Turkey to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals.

(All ages as of 23.09.11)

GOALKEEPERS

ONUR Kivrak
Age 23 (01.01.88)
Turkey international, but sidelined with a serious knee injury since March.

TOLGA Zengin
Age 27 (10.10.83)
Club captain who has been in outstanding form recently.

Plus: BORA Sevim (Age 27, 17.02.84)

Turkish FA decision hands league runners-up a second chance

Huseyin Avni Aker Stadium... the arena in Trabzon has a capacity of 24,000

Trabzonspor, from the Black Sea port of Trabzon, are competing in the Champions League group stages for the first time after they replaced Fenerbahce, who were withdrawn from the competition by their football association because of the country's ongoing match-fixing scandal.

Trabzonspor, however, will argue that they have every right to be in the group stage, having led the Turkish league for most of last season, only to be pipped at the finishing line. They had to be content with a runners-up spot and a place in the qualifying rounds of the Champions League, where they lost 3-1 on aggregate to Benfica. They were preparing to compete in the Europa League when the Turkish federation announced its decision to withdraw Fenerbahce.

DEFENDERS

Marek CECH (Slk)
Age 28 (26.01.83)
Attack-minded left-back who joined from West Bromwich Albion this summer.

Ondrej CELUSTKA (CzR)
Age 22 (18.06.89)
Right-back who joined from Slavia Prague in the close season after a spell at Palermo last term.

GIRAY KACAR
Age 26 (15.03.85)
Former under-21 centre-back who has been on the fringes of the national side.

Arkadiusz GLOWACKI (Pol)
Age 32 (13.03.79)
Centre-back signed from Wisla Krakow after 10 years with the Polish club.

SERKAN Balci
Age 28 (22.08.83)
Right-back who can also play further forward as a winger. Turkey international.

TAYFUN Cora
Age 27 (05.12.83)
Centre-back who can also play right-back.

Plus: Piotr **BROZEK** (Pol; Age 28, 21.04.83), **FERHAT** Oztorun (Age 24, 08.05.87)

TACTICS

Trabzonspor coach Gunes favours a system that relies upon a lone striker being supported by three attacking midfielders. Paulo Henrique can play further forward if needed, as can the right-back Serkan. Slovakian striker Vittek is another option should they feel the need to adopt a more conventional 4-4-2.

4-2-3-1

MIDFIELDERS

ALANZINHO (Bra)
Age 28 (22.02.83)
Attacking midfielder with good ball skills. Can play on either flank. Signed from Norwegian club Stabaek in 2009.

BARIS Atas
Age 24 (01.02.87)
Signed after being relegated with Diyarbakırspor in 2010.

Gustavo COLMAN (Arg)
Age 26 (19.04.85)
Signed as a result of his promising performances for Germinal Beerschot in Belgium.

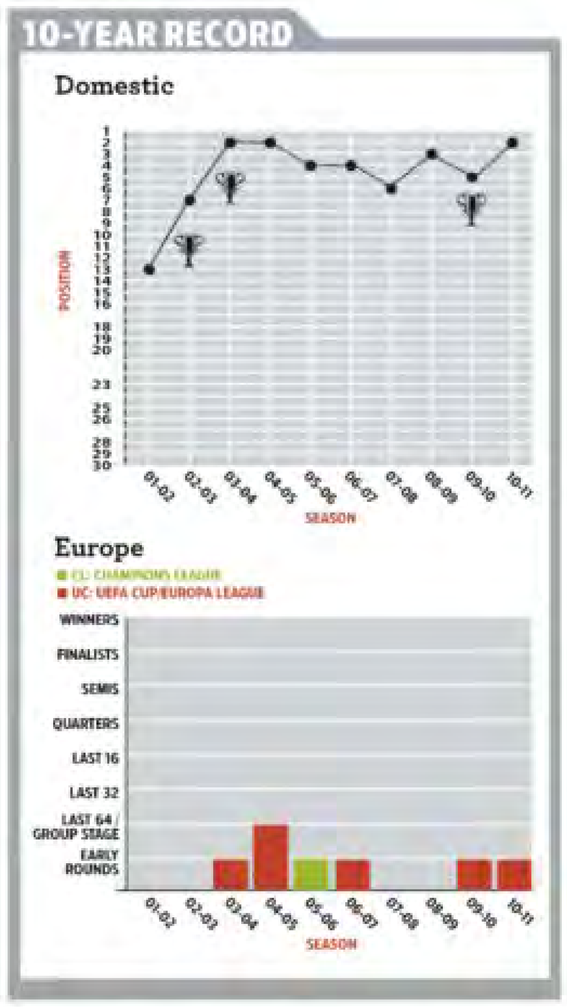
MUSTAFA Yumlu
Age 23 (25.09.87)
Trabzon-born, he has also played in central defence.

Marek SAPARA (Slk)
Age 29 (31.07.82)
Slovakia international signed from Ankaragucu this summer. Previously with Rosenborg.

Didier ZOKORA (IvC)
Age 30 (14.12.80)
Defensive midfielder who joined in the summer of 2011 from Sevilla, having previously been at Tottenham Hotspur and Saint-Etienne.

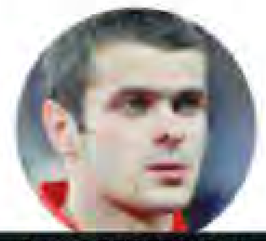
Plus: AYKUT Akgun (Age 23, 18.09.87), **SEZER** Badur (Age 27, 20.06.84)

10-YEAR RECORD



FORWARDS

Halil ALTINTOP
Age 28 (08.12.82)
Germany-born Turkey international who spent all his career in the Bundesliga before summer move to Trabzon. Twin brother of Real Madrid's Hamit Altintop.



Pawel BROZEK (Pol)
Age 28 (21.04.83)
Poland international who joined from Wisla Krakow earlier this year. Twin brother Piotr is also on Trabzonspor's books.

BURAK YILMAZ
Age 26 (15.07.85)
Turkey international who played a key role in last season's league title challenge after a disappointing spell at Fenerbahce.

Paulo HENRIQUE (Bra)
Age 22 (13.03.89)
Sparkled briefly during a spell with Heerenveen before returning to Palmeiras in Brazil. Joined Trabzonspor in the summer.

Adrian MIERZEJEWSKI (Pol)
Age 24 (06.11.86)
Poland international signed from Polonia Warsaw this summer for £4.6m. Current Polish Player of the Year.

Robert VITTEK (Slk)
Age 29 (01.04.82)
Slovakia's leading international scorer and one of the stars of the 2010 World Cup.

Fiorek666.com

SOUTH AMERICA
Friendly dates before World Cup marathon kicks off

Warm-up time is over. With World Cup qualification getting under way on October 7, the continent's teams have come to the end of a phase in which they have had two priorities: bedding in new coaches and travelling to earn money.

Argentina were doing both in early September, taking on Venezuela and Nigeria, in India and Bangladesh respectively, in the first matches of the reign of Alejandro Sabella, who was appointed after July's Copa America disappointment.

His opening 1-0 victory over Venezuela was a shaky affair. New captain Lionel Messi featured wide on the right in a 4-3-3 that only emphasised the ways in which Argentina are not Barcelona – such as their inability to sustain a pressing game, a slow back line and the lack of quality attacking full-backs. Against Nigeria an extra centre-back gave the team more defensive solidity in a 3-1 win. It will be interesting to see what Sabella does the next time his team faces Venezuela as they meet on October 11 in the second round of World Cup qualifiers.

The only South Americans never to have been to a World Cup finals, Venezuela are giving notice that they have a real chance of a 2014 slot. Their Copa America displays raised their profile and made them more attractive to Europe-based players. Athletic Bilbao defender Fernando Amorebieta and Grasshoppers midfielder Frank Feltscher made impressive debuts against Argentina as coach Cesar Farias continues to successfully integrate new faces.

The rise of Venezuela illustrates that, even without finals hosts Brazil, the 2014 South American qualifiers promise to be the most competitive in history.

That was certainly the message from Switzerland, where Chile went two up against world champions Spain and had a great chance to score a third, before going down 3-2 – the victims of a dubious injury-time penalty. Despite another defeat a few days later, a largely reserve side losing 1-0 to Mexico, Claudio Borghi's men look a good bet to make it to Brazil.

Peru, with a stronger side on paper than the one that came third in the Copa America, were held 2-2 at home by Bolivia, who might have won but for a controversial late penalty. Peru coach Sergio Markarian was probably happier a few days later with an alarm-free goalless draw in the return at the extreme altitude of La Paz.

Most of Bolivia's opponents will be pleased to come away from La Paz with a similar scoreline during the qualifiers, and the same applies to Quito, the mountain stronghold of Ecuador. Despite defensive problems and rumours of unrest in the camp, the Ecuadorians showed their chances cannot be discounted. With striker Cristian Benitez in fine form they punished Jamaica and Costa Rica at altitude with 5-2 and 4-0 victories.

Argentina were not the only ones to change their coach after the Copa America. Paraguay's Gerardo Martino resigned and Colombia's Hernan Dario Gomez was forced out following a scandal when he was seen hitting a woman outside a Bogota bar.

Heads...Peru striker Claudio Pizarro (right) in action against Bolivia

Like Sabella, the new coaches got off to winning starts, both with a bold approach. Francisco Arce, Paraguay's former right-back, watched his charges win 2-0 and 3-0 in Panama and Honduras, while Colombia, under former national-team midfielder Leonel Alvarez, played an extra striker in Teofilo Gutierrez, who scored three times in the 2-0 wins over Honduras and Jamaica. Colombia had offered the job to Martino, but those two wins were good enough for Alvarez – Gomez's former assistant who was in temporary control – to be appointed on a permanent basis.

With fresh coaches, new players and changed formations, this final round of warm-up games emphasised that the 2011 Copa America now belongs to history – a point felt, no doubt, by champions Uruguay when they fell behind just 13 seconds into their away game against Ukraine. They did, however, hit back to win 3-2, with a late goal from Abel Hernandez, the latest graduate of their impressive youth set-up.

This conveyor belt's success ensures Uruguay keep punching above their weight and will put them among the favourites to reach Brazil – where they last won the tournament back in 1950.

Tim Vickery

Looks familiar...new Argentina captain Messi (right) skips away from Venezuela debutant Amorebieta during their friendly in India

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AUSTRIA

Barazite tops charts

Dutch striker Nacer Barazite, who is a former Arsenal trainee, struck twice in Austria Vienna's 3-2 aggregate victory over Gaz Metan of Romania in the Europa League fourth qualifying round to become the competition's top scorer so far this season, with eight goals in six games.

Europa top scorer...Barazite

BELGIUM

Late leveller for visitors

It was honours even in the first big domestic showdown of the season as summer signing Milan Jovanovic scored an injury-time equaliser for Anderlecht in a 1-1 draw at Club Brugge.

The home side had Colin Coosemans sent off after 74 minutes but looked to have sealed victory when Vadis Odjija Ofoe scored an 84th-minute penalty.

Club Brugge, who are third in the table behind Gent and Cercle Brugge, remain the league's only unbeaten side.

CROATIA

Dinamo finally do it

Domestic league winners for the past six seasons – and topping the table again this term – Dinamo Zagreb qualified for the group stage of the Champions League for the first time in 12 years.

Sammir (two), Ante Rukavina and Fatos Beciraj scored against Malmo as they won 4-1 in the first leg of their play-off. They then clung on in the return in Sweden, going through 4-3 on aggregate despite having Sime Vrsaljko sent off.

Club Results

EUROPE

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

4th qualifying round

1st legs - Aug 16/17; 2nd legs - Aug 23/24

Arsenal (Eng) v Udinese (Ita) 1-0, 2-1 (agg 3-1); BATE Borisov (Bls) v Sturm Graz (Aut) 1-1, 2-0 (agg 3-1); Bayern Munich (Ger) v Zurich (Swi) 2-0, 1-0 (agg 3-0); Copenhagen (Den) v Viktoria Plzen (Cze) 1-3, 1-2 (agg 2-5); Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) v Malmo (Swe) 4-1, 0-2 (agg 4-3); Lyon (Fra) v Rubin Kazan (Rus) 3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2); Maccabi Haifa (Isr) v Genk (Blg) 2-1, 1-2 (aet) (agg 3-3, Genk 4-1 on pens); OB Odense (Den) v Villarreal (Spa) 1-0, 0-3 (agg 1-3); Twente Enschede (Hol) v Benfica (Por) 2-2, 1-3 (agg 3-5); Wisla Krakow (Pol) v APOEL Nicosia (Cyp) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3)

Winners qualified for group stage; losers entered Europa League at group stage

EUROPA LEAGUE

4th qualifying round

1st legs - Aug 18; 2nd legs - Aug 25

Aalesund (Nor) v AZ Alkmaar (Hol) 2-1, 0-6 (agg 2-7); AEK Athens (Gre) v Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo) 1-0, 1-1 (aet) (agg 2-1); Athletic Bilbao (Spa) v Trabzonspor (Tur) 0-0*; Atletico Madrid (Spa) v Vitoria Guimaraes (Por) 2-0, 4-0 (agg 6-0); Austria Vienna (Aut) v Gaz Metan (Rom) 3-1, 0-1 (agg 3-2); Besiktas (Tur) v Alania Vladikavkaz (Rus) 3-0, 0-2 (agg 3-2); Braga (Por) v Young Boys (Swi) 0-0, 2-2 (agg 2-2, Braga on away goals); Bursaspor (Tur) v Anderlecht (Blg) 1-2, 2-2 (agg 3-4); Celtic (Sco) v Sion (Swi) 3-0, 3-0 (agg 6-0)**; Differdange*** (Lux) v Paris Saint-Germain (Fra) 0-4, 0-2 (agg 0-6); Ekranas (Lit) v Hapoel Tel Aviv (Isr) 1-0, 0-4 (agg 1-4); Fulham (Eng) v Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk (Ukr) 3-0, 0-1 (agg 3-1); Hanover (Ger) v Sevilla (Spa) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Hearts (Sco) v Tottenham Hotspur (Eng) 0-5, 0-0 (agg 0-5); HJK Helsinki (Fin) v Schalke (Ger) 2-0, 1-6 (agg 3-6); Lazio (Ita) v Rabotnicki (Mac) 6-0, 3-1 (agg 9-1); Legia Warsaw (Pol) v Spartak Moscow (Rus) 2-2, 3-2 (agg 5-4); Litex Lovech (Bul) v Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr) 1-2, 0-1 (agg 1-3); Lokomotiv Moscow (Rus) v Spartak Trnava (Slk) 2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1); Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) v Panathinaikos (Gre) 3-0, 1-2 (agg 4-2); Maribor (Sln) v Rangers (Sco) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Metalist Kharkiv (Ukr) v Sochaux (Fra) 0-0, 4-0 (agg 4-0); Nacional (Por) v Birmingham City (Eng) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3); Nordsjaelland (Den) v Sporting Lisbon (Por) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Omonia Nicosia (Cyp) v Salzburg (Aut) 2-1, 0-1 (agg 2-2, Salzburg on away goals); PAOK Salonika (Gre) v Karpaty Lviv (Ukr) 2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1); Red Star Belgrade (Ser) v Rennes (Fra) 1-2, 0-4 (agg 1-6); Ried (Aut) v PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 0-0, 0-5 (agg 0-5); Rosenborg (Nor) v AEK Larnaca (Cyp) 0-0, 1-2 (agg 1-2); Shamrock Rovers (Rlr) v Partizan Belgrade (Ser) 1-1, 2-1 (aet) (agg 3-2); Slask Wroclaw (Pol) v Rapid Bucharest (Rom) 1-3, 1-1 (agg 2-4); Slovan Bratislava (Slk) v Roma (Ita) 1-0, 1-1 (agg 2-1); Standard Liege (Blg) v Helsingborg (Swe) 1-0, 3-1 (agg 4-1); Steaua Bucharest (Rom) v CSKA Sofia (Bul) 2-0, 1-1 (agg 3-1); Thun (Swi) v Stoke City (Eng) 0-1, 1-4 (agg 1-5); Vaslui (Rom) v Sparta Prague (Cze) 2-0, 0-1 (agg 2-1); Vorskla Poltava (Ukr) v Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 2-1, 3-2 (agg 5-3); Zestafoni (Geo) v Club Brugge (Blg) 3-3, 0-2 (agg 3-5)

**2nd leg cancelled as Trabzonspor took Champions League place of Fenerbahce, who were withdrawn by the Turkish federation while under investigation for match fixing; Athletic Bilbao went through*
***Sion originally won 3-1 on aggregate, but both legs were subsequently awarded 3-0 to Celtic after the Swiss side were found to have used ineligible players in each game*
****Greek team Volos, who had beaten Differdange in the previous round, were expelled from the tournament because of their implication in a match-fixing scandal; Differdange replaced them*

AUSTRIA

Aug 20: Kapfenberger 0 Wiener Neustadt 2; Wacker 2 Admira 2.
Aug 21: Mattersburg 2 Ried 3; Rapid 0 Austria 3; Salzburg 1 Sturm 1.
Aug 27: Mattersburg 1 Wacker 1; Sturm 5 Wiener Neustadt 0.
Aug 28: Salzburg 0 Rapid 0; Ried 1 Kapfenberger 0; Austria 2 Admira 4.
Sep 10: Wacker 0 Ried 5; Admira 4 Sturm 2; Rapid 1 Mattersburg 1; Kapfenberger 1 Salzburg 3.
Sep 11: Wiener Neustadt 1 Austria 1.

AUSTRIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Salzburg	7	4	3	0	10	3	15
Admira	7	4	2	1	16	10	14
Austria	7	3	2	2	13	8	11
Ried	7	3	2	2	12	8	11
Sturm	7	2	3	2	12	11	9
Rapid	7	2	3	2	5	5	9
W Neustadt	7	2	2	3	5	12	8
Wacker	7	1	4	2	6	11	7
Mattersburg	7	0	4	3	8	11	4
Kapfenberger	7	1	1	5	7	15	4

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated

BELGIUM

Regular season

Aug 19: Lierse 1 Beerschot 1.
Aug 20: Westerlo 2 Gent 3; OH Leuven 1 Mechelen 2; St Truiden 0 Lokeren 2; Cercle Brugge 3 Genk 2.
Aug 21: Anderlecht 2 Mons 2; Zulte Waregem 1 Club Brugge 1; Standard 3 Kortrijk 1.
Aug 27: Genk 0 Mechelen 0; Gent 1 Lierse 0; Lokeren 0 OH Leuven 1; Kortrijk 4 St Truiden 0; Mons 3 Zulte Waregem 1; Westerlo 1 Cercle Brugge 3.
Aug 28: Club Brugge 1 Anderlecht 1; Beerschot 1 Standard 1.
Sep 9: St Truiden 3 Genk 4.
Sep 10: Standard 1 Westerlo 0; OH Leuven 3 Mons 1; Lierse 1 Lokeren 1; Cercle Brugge 2 Beerschot 1.
Sep 11: Anderlecht 2 Kortrijk 0; Mechelen 1 Club Brugge 2; Zulte Waregem 1 Gent 3.

BELGIUM – REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gent	6	4	1	1	12	7	13
Cercle Brugge	6	4	1	1	10	7	13
Club Brugge	6	3	3	0	13	6	12
Anderlecht	6	3	2	1	10	6	11
Standard	6	3	2	1	10	7	11
Mechelen	6	3	1	2	8	8	10
Mons	6	2	3	1	12	10	9
Genk	6	2	3	1	11	9	9
OH Leuven	6	3	0	3	8	7	9
Kortrijk	6	2	2	2	8	6	8
Beerschot	6	1	3	2	9	10	6
Z Waregem	6	1	3	2	7	10	6
Lokeren	6	1	2	3	4	6	5
Lierse	6	0	4	2	4	6	4
St Truiden	6	0	1	5	9	19	1
Westerlo	6	0	1	5	4	15	1

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 enter championship play-offs, teams placed 7th to 14th enter Europa League place play-offs, bottom 2 (15th & 16th) enter relegation play-off (1 of them will go down)

BULGARIA

Aug 20: Minyor 1 Slavia 1; Botev 0 Cherno More 1; Chernomorets 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0; Ludogorets 4 Vidima-Rakovski 0.
Aug 21: Lokomotiv Sofia 3 Beroe 0; Levski 1 Montana 0; Lovech 6 Svetkavitsa 0; Kaliakra 1 CSKA 2.
Aug 27: Beroe 1 Chernomorets 2; Svetkavitsa 0 Ludogorets 1; Cherno More 2 Minyor 0; Levski 3 Botev 0.
Aug 28: Montana 0 CSKA 5; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 2 Kaliakra 0; Vidima-Rakovski 2 Lokomotiv Sofia 2; Slavia 0 Lovech 2.
Sep 9: Lokomotiv Sofia 4 Svetkavitsa 1.
Sep 10: Botev 2 Montana 4; Chernomorets 4 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Kaliakra 3 Beroe 1; Lovech 1 Cherno More 0.
Sep 11: Minyor 0 Levski 1; Ludogorets 6 Slavia 0.
Sep 12: CSKA 3 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 0.

BULGARIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	5	5	0	0	13	2	15
Ludogorets	5	4	1	0	13	1	13
Lovech	5	4	1	0	12	2	13
Chernomorets	5	4	0	1	9	2	12
Cherno More	5	4	0	1	8	2	12
Levski	5	4	0	1	7	3	12
Lok Sofia	5	2	1	2	11	7	7
Minyor	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Lok Plovdiv	5	2	1	2	4	6	7
Montana	5	2	0	3	6	11	6
Slavia	5	1	1	3	4	12	4
Kaliakra	5	1	0	4	5	8	3
Botev	5	1	0	4	5	11	3
V-Rakovski	5	0	2	3	3	12	2
Beroe	5	0	0	5	4	12	0
Svetkavitsa	5	0	0	5	1	15	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

CROATIA

Aug 19: Lokomotiva 0 Rijeka 0; Slaven 3 Inter 2.
Aug 20: Sibenik 1 Zadar 1; Karlovac 2 Cibalia 2; Varazdin 2 Istra 2; Lucko 1 Split 2; Osijek 0 Dinamo 4.
Aug 21: Hajduk 4 Zagreb 0.
Aug 26: Inter 2 Zadar 0; Rijeka 1 Sibenik 0; Zagreb 1 Varazdin 0.
Aug 27: Dinamo 1 Lucko 0; Istra 2 Lokomotiva 1; Cibalia 0 Osijek 1; Slaven 3 Karlovac 0.
Aug 28: Split 1 Hajduk 1.
Sep 9: Lokomotiva 2 Zagreb 3.
Sep 10: Osijek 2 Slaven 0; Karlovac 0 Inter 1; Lucko 0 Cibalia 1; Varazdin 1 Split 2; Sibenik 0 Istra 0; Hajduk 1 Dinamo 1.
Sep 11: Zadar 4 Rijeka 4.

CROATIA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	7	6	1	0	17	1	19
Hajduk	7	4	2	1	13	5	14
Osijek	7	4	2	1	11	7	14
Slaven	7	4	1	2	12	8	13
Inter	7	4	1	2	9	6	13
Split	7	3	3	1	12	9	12
Rijeka	7	3	3	1	10	7	12
Zagreb	7	4	0	3	8	11	12
Lokomotiva	7	3	2	2	11	6	11
Zadar	7	2	3	2	9	12	9
Istra	7	2	2	3	7	9	8
Cibalia	7	2	1	4	6	11	7
Sibenik	7	1	2	4	3	8	5
Karlovac	7	1	1	5	5	18	4
Lucko	7	0	1	6	2	9	1
Varazdin	7	0	1	6	4	12	1

30-round season (15x2); bottom 5 will be relegated

CYPRUS

Regular season

Aug 27: Apollon 2 Ermis 0; Ethnikos 0 Anorthosis 1; Nea Salamina 0 AEL 3.
Aug 28: Olympiakos 0 Anagennisi 0; ENP 2 Aris 0.
Aug 29: AEK 0 APOEL 0; Omonia 4 Alki 1.
Sep 9: APOEL 3 Alki 1.
Sep 10: Ermis 0 Ethnikos 0; AEK 1 Olympiakos 1; AEL 1 ENP 0.
Sep 11: Anorthosis 1 Nea Salamina 1; Anagennisi 4 Apollon 1; Aris 1 Omonia 1.

CYPRUS – REGULAR	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
AEL	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Omonia	2	1	1	0	5	2	4
Anagennisi	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
APOEL	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Anorthosis	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
ENP	2	1	0	1	2	1	3
Apollon	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
AEK	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Olympiakos	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Ethnikos	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Aris	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Ermis	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Nea Salamina	2	0	1	1	1	4	1
Alki	2	0	0	2	2	7	0

26-round regular season (13x2); top 4 will form championship group, 5th to 8th will form "placement" group, 9th to 12th will form relegation group (from which the bottom team will go down), 13th & 14th will be relegated automatically

CZECH REPUBLIC

Aug 19: Jablonec 4 Ostrava 0.
Aug 20: Pribram 2 Liberec 3; Dukla 2 Plzen 4.
Aug 21: Mlada Boleslav 2 Zizkov 0; Bohemians 1905 2 Ceske Budejovice 1; Sparta 1 Hradec Kralove 0; Olomouc 1 Slovacko 1.
Aug 22: Teplice 0 Slavia 0.
Aug 26: Slavia 1 Mlada Boleslav 1.
Aug 27: Ostrava 0 Bohemians 1905 1; Slovacko 1 Dukla 0; Liberec 0 Teplice 2.
Aug 28: Ceske Budejovice 1 Jablonec 5; Hradec Kralove 0 Pribram 1; Zizkov 2 Olomouc 2.
Aug 29: Plzen 0 Sparta 2.
Sep 9: Dukla 4 Hradec Kralove 0; Olomouc 2 Plzen 3.

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CZECH REPUBLIC

History boys

Viktoria Plzen beat Copenhagen 2-0, with goals from Marek Bakos and Michal Duris, to overcome the Danish side 5-2 on aggregate and qualify for the group stage of the Champions League for the first time.

ENGLAND

Rooney on fire

Wayne Rooney became only the fourth player to score a hat-trick in successive Premier League games, following up his three goals in Manchester United's 8-2 thrashing of Arsenal with a treble against Bolton Wanderers.

Leaders United scored 18 goals in their opening four games of the new season to create a Premier League record.

7 hat-tricks scored by Wayne Rooney, equalling Bobby Charlton's club record for Man United

Treble...Rooney celebrates

FRANCE

Simone takes charge

Former Italy international Marco Simone has become joint-coach of second-tier Monaco along with Jean Petit. The pair replace Laurent Banide, who was sacked when the 2004 Champions League finalists took just four points from their first six games after last term's relegation.

Sep 10: Bohemians 1905 1 Slovacko 1; Mlada Boleslav 1 Liberec 4.
Sep 11: Jablonec 4 Slavia 0; Ceske Budejovice 0 Ostrava 0; Teplice 2 Pribram 1.
Sep 12: Sparta 4 Zizkov 1.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	6	6	0	0	15	4	18
Jablonec	6	4	1	1	19	3	13
Liberec	6	4	1	1	14	8	13
Boh'ians 1905	6	4	1	1	8	8	13
M Boleslav	6	3	2	1	9	6	11
Plzen	6	3	1	2	12	10	10
Teplice	6	3	1	2	8	9	10
Pribram	6	3	0	3	10	11	9
Dukla	6	2	1	3	10	8	7
H Kralove	6	2	0	4	4	9	6
Slovacko	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Slavia	6	1	2	3	5	10	5
Zizkov	6	1	1	4	5	11	4
C Budejovice	6	0	1	5	7	17	1
Ostrava	6	0	1	5	4	16	1
Olomouc*	6	2	3	1	10	7	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated
*9pts deducted for attempted match-fixing

DENMARK

Aug 20: OB 3 Lyngby 1; Horsens 0 Copenhagen 1.
Aug 21: Midtjylland 2 Nordsjaelland 1; HB Koge 3 Silkeborg 0; AGF 0 Brondby 0.
Aug 22: SonderjyskE 0 AaB 0.
Aug 27: HB Koge 1 AaB 4.
Aug 28: OB 2 SonderjyskE 4; Nordsjaelland 4 Lyngby 0; Copenhagen 2 Silkeborg 1; Midtjylland 2 Brondby 1.
Aug 29: Horsens 0 AGF 3.
Sep 10: Lyngby 0 Copenhagen 1; Silkeborg 1 OB 3.
Sep 11: AaB 1 Nordsjaelland 2; SonderjyskE 1 Horsens 3; Brondby 5 HB Koge 0.
Sep 12: AGF 4 Midtjylland 2.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Copenhagen	8	7	1	0	16	5	22
AaB	8	4	3	1	15	10	15
OB	8	4	2	2	17	13	14
Nordsjaelland	8	4	1	3	12	9	13
Horsens	8	3	3	2	15	11	12
AGF	8	3	3	2	14	11	12
SonderjyskE	8	3	3	2	12	11	12
Midtjylland	8	4	0	4	12	14	12
Brondby	8	2	3	3	13	12	9
Silkeborg	8	1	2	5	7	14	5
Lyngby	8	1	1	6	7	15	4
HB Koge	8	1	0	7	9	24	3

33-round season (11x3); bottom 2 will be relegated

ENGLAND

Saturday, August 20
Arsenal 0
Liverpool 2 (Ramsey og 78, Suarez 89) Att: 60,090

Aston Villa 3 (Agbonlahor 11, Heskey 25, Bent 66)
Blackburn 1 (Gamst Pedersen 52) Att: 32,319

Chelsea 2 (Anelka 53, Malouda 82)
West Bromwich 1 (Long 4) Att: 41,091

Everton 0
Queens Park Rangers 1 (Smith 30) Att: 35,008

Sunderland 0
Newcastle 1 (R Taylor 61) Att: 47,751

Swansea 0
Wigan 0 Att: 19,028

Sunday, August 21
Bolton 2 (Klasnic 38, K Davies 63)
Manchester City 3 (Silva 26, Barry 36, Dzeko 47) Att: 24,273

Norwich 1 (De Laet 36)
Stoke 1 (Jones 90+3) Att: 26,272

Wolverhampton 2 (Doyle 42, Jarvis 45+1)
Fulham 0 Att: 22,657

Monday, August 22
Manchester United 3 (Welbeck 61, Anderson 75, Rooney 86)
Tottenham 0 Att: 75,498

Saturday, August 27
Aston Villa 0
Wolverhampton 0 Att: 30,776

Blackburn 0
Everton 1 (Arteta pen 90+2) Att: 22,826

Chelsea 3 (Bosingwa 5, Lampard pen 81, Mata 90+11)
Norwich 1 (Holt 63) Att: 41,765

Liverpool 3 (Henderson 15, Skrtel 52, Adam 53)
Bolton 1 (Klasnic 90+1) Att: 44,725

Swansea 0
Sunderland 0 Att: 19,938

Wigan 2 (Di Santo 41, 66)
Queens Park Rangers 0 Att: 17,225

Sunday, August 28
Manchester United 8 (Welbeck 22, Young 27, 90+2, Rooney 41, 63, pen 82, Nani 67, Park 69)
Arsenal 2 (Walcott 45+1, Van Persie 74) Att: 75,448

Newcastle 2 (Best 47, 65)
Fulham 1 (Dempsey 88) Att: 42,684

Tottenham 1 (Kaboul 68)
Manchester City 5 (Dzeko 33, 40, 55, 90+2, Aguero 59) Att: 36,150

West Bromwich 0
Stoke 1 (Shotton 88) Att: 22,909

Saturday, September 10
Arsenal 1 (Arshavin 39)
Swansea 0 Att: 60,087

Bolton 0
Manchester United 5 (Hernandez 4, 57, Rooney 19, 25, 68) Att: 25,944

Everton 2 (Osman 19, Baines pen 69)
Aston Villa 2 (Petrov 63, Agbonlahor 83) Att: 32,736

Manchester City 3 (Aguero 13, 62, 69)
Wigan 0 Att: 46,509

Stoke 1 (Walters pen 21)
Liverpool 0 Att: 27,592

Sunderland 1 (Ji 90)
Chelsea 2 (Terry 17, Sturridge 50) Att: 36,699

Wolverhampton 0
Tottenham 2 (Adebayor 66, Defoe 80) Att: 25,274

Sunday, September 11
Fulham 1 (Zamora 38)
Blackburn 1 (Rochina 32) Att: 24,856

Norwich 0
West Bromwich 1 (Odemwingie 3) Att: 26,158

Monday, September 12
Queens Park Rangers 0
Newcastle 0 Att: 16,211

ENGLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Man United	4	4	0	0	18	3	12
Man City	4	4	0	0	15	3	12
Chelsea	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Newcastle	4	2	2	0	3	1	8
Stoke	4	2	2	0	3	1	8
Liverpool	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Wolves	4	2	1	1	4	3	7
Aston Villa	4	1	3	0	5	3	6
Wigan	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Everton	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
QPR	4	1	1	2	1	6	4
Arsenal	4	1	1	2	3	10	4
West Brom	4	1	0	3	3	5	3
Bolton	4	1	0	3	7	11	3
Tottenham	3	1	0	2	3	8	3
Sunderland	4	0	2	2	2	4	2
Norwich	4	0	2	2	3	6	2
Fulham	4	0	2	2	2	5	2
Swansea	4	0	2	2	0	5	2
Blackburn	4	0	1	3	3	7	1

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers
8 Wayne Rooney (Manchester United)
6 Sergio Aguero (Manchester City)
6 Edin Dzeko (Manchester City)
3 Ivan Klasnic (Bolton)

FINLAND

Aug 19: KuPS 1 Haka 2.
Aug 21: HJK 5 RoPS 0; Mariehamn 2 JJK 2; VPS 1 MyPa 2.
Aug 22: Inter 0 TPS 0; Jaro 2 Honka 2.
Aug 26: TPS 5 KuPS 0.
Aug 27: JJK 1 Inter 0.
Aug 28: RoPS 0 VPS 0; Honka 2 Mariehamn 0.
Aug 29: Haka 1 HJK 3; MyPa 2 Jaro 1.
Sep 8: MyPa 0 Mariehamn 1; Honka 2 JJK 2; RoPS 0 Jaro 2; VPS 1 Haka 2; TPS 2 HJK 1.
Sep 9: KuPS 2 Inter 1.
Sep 11: JJK 4 MyPa 0; VPS 3 TPS 2; Jaro 1 Haka 1; Mariehamn 5 RoPS 2.
Sep 12: HJK 1 KuPS 0; Inter 2 Honka 2.

FINLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
HJK	24	20	0	4	61	17	60
Inter	24	13	5	6	54	32	44
JJK	24	11	9	4	45	34	42
TPS	24	10	7	7	36	33	37
Honka	24	8	10	6	37	33	34
Haka	24	9	5	10	29	42	32
Mariehamn	24	8	5	11	29	33	29
MyPa	24	8	4	12	25	35	28
Jaro	24	6	8	10	37	39	26
KuPS	24	5	9	10	30	43	24
VPS	24	4	11	9	21	32	23
RoPS	24	2	7	15	24	55	13

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

FRANCE

Saturday, August 20
Ajaccio 1 (Sammaritano 6)
Evian 1 (Berigaud 75) Att: 6,886

Bordeaux 1 (Gouffran 21)
Auxerre 1 (Traore 66) Att: 20,350

Brest 1 (Lesoimier 12)
Lyon 1 (Gomis 68) Att: 14,693

Caen 1 (Nivet pen 90+1)
Lille 2 (Pedretti 67, Debuchy 88) Att: 16,938

Dijon 2 (Thil 3, Jovial 88)
Lorient 0 Att: 12,872

Nice 1 (Mounier 31)
Toulouse 1 (Regattin 89) Att: 8,390

Sunday, August 21
Marseille 0
Saint-Etienne 0 Att: 41,493

Montpellier 4 (Belhanda pen 31, Dernis 51, Camara 72, 86)
Rennes 0 Att: 14,021

Nancy 1 (Hadji pen 66)
Sochaux 2 (Peybernes 53, Privat 64) Att: 15,126

Paris Saint-Germain 2 (Gameiro 39, Nene pen 64)
Valenciennes 1 (Gomis 45+1) Att: 35,675

Saturday, August 27
Auxerre 4 (Chafni 33, Traore 75, 79, Le Tallec 89)
Ajaccio 1 (Ilan 83) Att: 8,622

Evian 0
Dijon 1 (Jovial 68) Att: 8,227

Lorient 2 (Mvuemba 77, Monnet-Paquet 90+2)
Nancy 1 (Bakar 9) Att: 14,879

Lyon 2 (Pjanic 49, Pied 82)
Montpellier 1 (Bedimo 90+1) Att: 32,333

Nice 0
Brest 0 Att: 7,875

Valenciennes 1 (Dossevi 27)
Bordeaux 2 (Traore 79, Modeste 90+2) Att: 15,377

Sunday, August 28
Lille 3 (Sow 15, pen 74, Chedjou 66)
Marseille 2 (Valbuena 55, 61) Att: 16,921

Rennes 3 (Boukari 5, Kembo 41, Mangane 44)
Caen 2 (Heurtaux 57, Bulot 61) Att: 19,715

Sochaux 2 (Boudebouz 5, pen 41)
Saint-Etienne 1 (Aubameyang 35) Att: 12,137

Toulouse 1 (Capoue 38)
Paris Saint-Germain 3 (Gameiro 56, Erdinc 90, Menez 90+3) Att: 31,122

Saturday, September 10
Ajaccio 3 (Sammaritano 47, 54, Ilan 57)
Valenciennes 1 (Danic 35) Att: 7,000

Bordeaux 0
Evian 0 Att: 15,853

Caen 0
Toulouse 1 (Capoue 90+2) Att: 12,575

GERMANY

More goals for Gomez

Mario Gomez's four goals for Bayern in their 7-0 win against Freiburg means he has scored an amazing eight hat-tricks in less than 11 months for his club. The recent four goals followed on from the three he scored the previous week away to Kaiserslautern.

Hanover's reserve keeper Markus Miller is to undergo treatment for mental exhaustion. The 29-year-old plays for the same club as Germany goalkeeper Robert Enke, who committed suicide in November 2009 by throwing himself in front of a train after battling depression for years.

"I have decided to tell my club, our fans and the media of my illness," said Miller. "Because of my mental exhaustion, I will immediately allow myself to be treated in hospital."

ITALY

Juve's new stadium

Juventus inaugurated their new 41,000-capacity arena with a 1-1 draw against English third-tier side Notts County, who are the oldest professional club in the world and were responsible for Juve changing their pink kit to black-and-white stripes back in 1903.

Friendly...Juve's Eljero Elia (right) and Julian Kelly of Notts County

Elsewhere, Gian Piero Gasperini is under pressure just two games into his career as Internazionale coach. Having switched the *Nerazzurri* to a back three this season, Gasperini's side were beaten 2-1 by Milan in the Italian Super Cup and then lost their

Dijon 1 (Corgnet 42)
Lyon 2 (Bamba og 7, Gomis 53) Att: 14,325

Marseille 0
Rennes 1 (Kembo 76) Att: 40,627

Saint-Etienne 1 (Rozehnal og 6)
Lille 3 (Hazard 55, 72, Obraniak 85) Att: 23,064

Sochaux 1 (Butin 40)
Lorient 1 (Emeghara 87) Att: 10,031

Sunday, September 11
Montpellier 1 (Camara 74)
Nice 0 Att: 12,168

Nancy 0
Auxerre 0 Att: 14,206

Paris Saint-Germain 1 (Pastore 67)
Brest 0 Att: 40,134

FRANCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Montpellier	5	4	0	1	10	3	12
Lyon	5	3	2	0	9	5	11
Lille	5	3	1	1	9	6	10
PSG	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Toulouse	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Rennes	5	3	1	1	10	8	10
Sochaux	5	2	2	1	8	7	8
Lorient	5	2	2	1	5	5	8
Saint-Etienne	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Auxerre	5	1	3	1	8	7	6
Bordeaux	5	1	3	1	5	5	6
Evian	5	1	3	1	4	4	6
Caen	5	2	0	3	6	7	6
Dijon	5	2	0	3	5	9	6
Ajaccio	5	1	2	2	6	9	5
Brest	5	0	4	1	3	4	4
Marseille	5	0	3	2	6	8	3
Nancy	5	0	2	3	3	6	2
Nice	5	0	2	3	2	6	2
Valenciennes	5	0	1	4	3	8	1

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers
5 Alain Traore (Auxerre)
4 Frederic Sammaritano (Ajaccio)

GERMANY

Friday, August 19
Monchengladbach 4 (Reus 14, 67, Daems pen 31, Bobadilla 45)
Wolfsburg 1 (Hasebe 12) Att: 43,224

Saturday, August 20
Augsburg 0
1899 Hoffenheim 2 (Babel 4, Salihovic pen 74) Att: 30,004

Bayern Munich 5 (Van Buyten 12, Ribery 17, Robben 33, Gomez 55, Olic 79)
Hamburg 0 Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 2 (Lewandowski 50, Grosskreutz 79)
Nuremberg 0 Att: 78,400

Cologne 1 (Jajalo 19)
Kaiserslautern 1 (Ilicevic 16) Att: 47,200

Stuttgart 0
Bayer Leverkusen 1 (Kiessling 27) Att: 53,000

Werder Bremen 5 (Fritz 29, Pizarro 33, Arnautovic 65, Hunt pen 87, Wesley 90+3)
Freiburg 3 (Cisse 7, 47, Reisinger 84) Att: 39,201

Sunday, August 21
Hanover 1 (Pinto 32)
Hertha 1 (Lasogga 82) Att: 41,200

Mainz 2 (Ivanschitz 7, Soto 12)
Schalke 4 (Huntelaar 57, Howedes 64, Matip 80, Fuchs 90) Att: 34,034

Friday, August 26
Hertha 1 (Raffael 85)
Stuttgart 0 Att: 52,232

Saturday, August 27
Bayer Leverkusen 0
Borussia Dortmund 0 Att: 30,210

Freiburg 3 (Barth 29, Jendrisek 39, Makiadi 59)
Wolfsburg 0 Att: 20,000

Hamburg 3 (Petric pen 11, Rajkovic 58, Son 61)
Cologne 4 (Chihi 21, Novakovic 49, Clemens 84, McKenna 87) Att: 51,289

1899 Hoffenheim 1 (Roberto Firmino 37)
Werder Bremen 2 (Arnautovic 38, Rosenberg 83) Att: 28,750

Kaiserslautern 0
Bayern Munich 3 (Gomez pen 37, 54, 68) Att: 49,780

Nuremberg 1 (Esswein 76)
Augsburg 0 Att: 43,071

Sunday, August 28
Hanover 1 (Abdellaoue 29)
Mainz 1 (Allagui 2) Att: 40,420

Schalke 1 (Raul 64)
Monchengladbach 0 Att: 61,673

Friday, September 9
Augsburg 1 (Hosogai 5)
Bayer Leverkusen 4 (Sam 6, 72, Kiessling 23, Derdiyok 78) Att: 30,660

Saturday, September 10
Bayern Munich 7 (Gomez 8, 52, 55, pen 70, Ribery 25, 40, Petersen 89)
Freiburg 0 Att: 69,000

Borussia Dortmund 1 (Lewandowski 88)
Hertha 2 (Raffael 50, Niemeyer 80) Att: 80,720

Mainz 0
1899 Hoffenheim 4 (Roberto Firmino 16, Babel pen 45+2, 73, Noveski og 84) Att: 31,500

Monchengladbach 1 (Arango 57)
Kaiserslautern 0 Att: 52,083

Stuttgart 3 (Okazaki 8, Kuzmanovic 79, Tasci 86)
Hanover 0 Att: 53,000

Werder Bremen 2 (Pizarro 51, 77)
Hamburg 0 Att: 41,600

Sunday, September 11
Cologne 1 (Chihi 38)
Nuremberg 2 (Simons pen 31, pen 34) Att: 43,200

Wolfsburg 2 (Mandzukic 33, 82)
Schalke 1 (Raul 12) Att: 30,000

GERMANY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bayern	5	4	0	1	16	1	12
Werder	5	4	0	1	11	5	12
M'gladbach	5	3	1	1	7	3	10
Leverkusen	5	3	1	1	6	3	10
Hoffenheim	5	3	0	2	9	4	9
Schalke	5	3	0	2	11	8	9
Nuremberg	5	3	0	2	5	5	9
Hertha	5	2	2	1	6	5	8
Hanover	5	2	2	1	6	7	8
Stuttgart	5	2	1	2	7	3	7
Dortmund	5	2	1	2	6	4	7
Mainz	5	2	1	2	7	10	7
Wolfsburg	5	2	0	3	6	9	6
Freiburg	5	1	1	3	9	16	4
Cologne	5	1	1	3	7	14	4
Augsburg	5	0	2	3	4	10	2
Kaiserslautern	5	0	2	3	2	8	2
Hamburg	5	0	1	4	6	16	1

34-round season (17x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

Leading scorers
8 Mario Gomez (Bayern Munich)
4 Papiss Demba Cisse (Freiburg)
4 Klaas-Jan Huntelaar (Schalke)

GREECE

Aug 27: OFI 1 Atromitos 1; Giannina 0 Aris 0.
Aug 28: Panionios 2 Ergotelis 2; Kerkyra 0 Panathinaikos 2; PAOK 1 Xanthi 0.
Sep 10: Panetolikos 0 Panionios 1; Ergotelis 2 PAOK 1.
Sep 11: Asteras 0 Kerkyra 0; Aris 0 Atromitos 1; Panathinaikos 3 Giannina 1.

GREECE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panathinaikos	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Ergotelis	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Panionios	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Atromitos	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
PAOK	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
OFI	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Asteras	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Aris	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Giannina	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
Kerkyra	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
AEK	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Olympiakos	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Panetolikos	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Xanthi	1	0	0	1	0	1	0

26-round season* (13x2); teams placed 2nd to 5th will enter play-offs to determine Greece's 2nd Champions League representatives; number of teams to be relegated to be confirmed, *at press time, the authorities had yet to decide whether or not to include 2 more teams in the top division

HOLLAND

Aug 19: Roda JC 0 RKC 2.
Aug 20: Vitesse 2 Utrecht 1; Excelsior 1 De Graafschap 1; Heerenveen 1 Twente 5; NAC 2 Groningen 2.
Aug 21: Heracles 1 Feyenoord 1; AZ 4 NEC 0; VVV 2 Ajax 2; Den Haag 0 PSV 3.
Aug 26: Ajax 4 Vitesse 1.
Aug 27: RKC 2 NAC 1; Twente 4 VVV 1; NEC 2 Heracles 1; Utrecht 3 Roda JC 1.
Aug 28: De Graafschap 0 Den Haag 3; Feyenoord 2 Heerenveen 2; Groningen 0 AZ 3; PSV 6 Excelsior 1.
Sep 10: Roda JC 2 Twente 1; De Graafschap 1 NEC 0; Den Haag 0 RKC 1; AZ 4 Vitesse 0; Heracles 2 Ajax 3.
Sep 11: Heerenveen 3 Groningen 0; NAC 1 Feyenoord 3; VVV 3 PSV 3; Excelsior 2 Utrecht 3.

HOLLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ajax	5	4	1	0	18	7	13
AZ	5	4	0	1	14	3	12
Twente	5	4	0	1	13	4	12
Feyenoord	5	3	2	0	11	4	11
PSV	5	3	1	1	14	7	10
RKC	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Utrecht	5	2	2	1	9	7	8
Vitesse	5	2	1	2	7	9	7
NEC	5	2	1	2	6	8	7
Roda JC	5	2	0	3	5	10	6
Heracles	5	1	2	2	8	9	5
Heerenveen	5	1	2	2	9	14	5
De Graafschap	5	1	2	2	5	10	5
Den Haag	5	1	1	3	5	8	4
Groningen	5	1	1	3	7	12	4
VVV	5	0	3	2	6	13	3
NAC	5	0	1	4	5	10	1
Excelsior	5	0	1	4	4	14	1

34-round season (17x2); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd & 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs

ISRAEL

Regular season
Aug 20: Netanya 1 Maccabi Haifa 4; Acre 2 Bnei Yehuda 0; Hapoel Haifa 0 Kiryat Shmona 1; Rishon LeZion 4 Bnei Sakhnin 2.
Aug 21: Hapoel Petah Tikva 1 Maccabi Tel Aviv 3.
Aug 22: Hapoel Tel Aviv 4 Maccabi Petah Tikva 1.
Aug 27: Maccabi Haifa 2 Hapoel Petah Tikva 2; Beitar 3 Acre 1; Kiryat Shmona 1 Netanya 3; Ramat HaSharon 1 Rishon LeZion 2; Bnei Sakhnin 4 Be'er Sheva 3.
Aug 28: Maccabi Petah Tikva 2 Hapoel Haifa 1; Bnei Yehuda 1 Hapoel Tel Aviv 1.
Aug 29: Maccabi Tel Aviv 4 Ashdod 0.
Aug 30: Be'er Sheva 0 Beitar 1.
Sep 10: Rishon LeZion 0 Maccabi Tel Aviv 2; Ashdod 1 Maccabi Haifa 0; Hapoel Haifa 0 Bnei Yehuda 2; Netanya 0 Maccabi Petah Tikva 1; Hapoel Petah Tikva 1 Kiryat Shmona 1; Bnei Sakhnin 3 Ramat 0.
Sep 11: Hapoel Tel Aviv 1 Beitar 0.
Sep 12: Acre 2 Be'er Sheva 0.

ISRAEL – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
M Tel Aviv	3	3	0	0	9	1	9
H Tel Aviv	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Bnei Sakhnin	3	2	0	1	9	7	6
Acre	3	2	0	1	5	3	6
Beitar	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Rishon LeZion	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
M Petah Tikva	3	2	0	1	4	5	6
M Haifa	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Bnei Yehuda	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Kiryat Shmona	3	1	1	1	3	4	4
Netanya	3	1	0	2	4	6	3
Ashdod	2	1	0	1	1	4	3
Be'er Sheva	3	0	0	3	3	7	0
H Haifa	3	0	0	3	1	5	0
R HaSharon	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
H Petah Tikva*	3	0	2	1	4	6	-7

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group, bottom 8 will form relegation group (from which 3 will go down)
**9pts deducted for going into administration*

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opening Serie A game 4-3 at Palermo.

PORTUGAL

Porto march on

Porto won their first four league games to stretch their unbeaten run in the competition to 43 games – 39 wins, four draws – a sequence that dates back to February 2010.

The Portuguese champions were, however, beaten by Barcelona in the UEFA Super Cup. They lost 2-0 to goals from Lionel Messi and Cesc Fabregas, and also had Rolando and Fredy Guarin sent off.

RUSSIA

Eto'o dream start

Samuel Eto'o made an immediate impact when he scored on his debut for Anzhi Makhachkala in their 1-1 draw away to Rostov.

Eto'o made his first appearance for his new club as a 58th-minute substitute for Diego Tardelli and grabbed an equalising goal 22 minutes later following a cross from fellow new recruit Yuri Zhirkov. He followed that up with another goal in his second game, a 2-1 win at home to Volga Nizhny Novgorod that lifted big spenders Anzhi to fourth spot in the table, six points behind leaders CSKA Moscow.

English second-tier side Portsmouth will host a friendly against Rostov on October 5 to raise money for the families of the victims of the recent air crash in Russia, which killed 44 people and was carrying the Lokomotiv Yaroslavl ice hockey team.

Top...Porto's Joao Moutinho

ITALY

Friday, September 9

Milan 2 (Ibrahimovic 28, Cassano 32)
Lazio 2 (Klose 12, Cisse 20) Att: 48,543

Saturday, September 10

Cesena 1 (Guana 23)
Napoli 3 (Lavezzi 3, Campagnaro 67, Hamsik 86) Att: 20,942

Sunday, September 11

Catania 0
Siena 0 Att: 13,258

Chievo 2 (Pellissier 5, Thereau 23)
Novara 2 (Marianini 26, Paci 85) Att: 7,000

Fiorentina 2 (Gilardino 19, Cerci 46)
Bologna 0 Att: 20,040

Genoa 2 (Miguel Veloso 6, Mesto 55)
Atalanta 2 (Moralez 8, 42) Att: 19,917

Juventus 4 (Lichtsteiner 16, Pepe 58, Vidal 72, Marchisio 83)
Parma 1 (Giovinco pen 90+2) Att: 35,920

Lecce 0
Udinese 2 (Basta 2, Di Natale 16) Att: 8,578

Palermo 4 (Miccoli 47, 86, Hernandez 54, Pinilla 88)
Internazionale 3 (Milito 33, pen 51, Forlan 90+1) Att: 20,795

Roma 1 (De Rossi 90+6)
Cagliari 2 (Conti 68, El Kabir 90+4) Att: 41,000

ITALY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Juventus	1	1	0	0	4	1	3
Napoli	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Fiorentina	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Udinese	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Palermo	1	1	0	0	4	3	3
Cagliari	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Chievo	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Genoa	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Lazio	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Milan	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Novara	1	0	1	0	2	2	1
Catania	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Siena	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Inter	1	0	0	1	3	4	0
Roma	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Cesena	1	0	0	1	1	3	0
Bologna	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Lecce	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Parma	1	0	0	1	1	4	0
Atalanta*	1	0	1	0	2	2	-5

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will go down
**6pts deducted because of involvement in match-fixing scandal*

Leading scorers

2 Fabrizio Miccoli (Palermo)
2 Diego Milito (Internazionale)
2 Maximiliano Moralez (Atalanta)

NORWAY

Aug 19: Odd Grenland 4 Viking 2.
Aug 20: Sarpsborg 0 Valerenga 2.
Aug 21: Stromsgodset 2 Aalesund 2; Sogndal 2 Start 0; Haugesund 2 Rosenborg 2; Tromso 3 Fredrikstad 1; Stabaek 1 Brann 1.
Aug 22: Molde 1 Lillestrom 0.
Aug 26: Brann 1 Tromso 1.
Aug 27: Valerenga 3 Haugesund 2.
Aug 28: Fredrikstad 1 Stromsgodset 1; Start 1 Sarpsborg 0; Lillestrom 0 Sogndal 3; Viking 1 Stabaek 0; Aalesund 1 Molde 3.
Aug 29: Rosenborg 7 Odd Grenland 0.
Sep 9: Stabaek 2 Tromso 4.
Sep 10: Stromsgodset 2 Viking 2.
Sep 11: Sogndal 0 Aalesund 0; Haugesund 2 Lillestrom 0; Odd Grenland 2 Fredrikstad 1; Valerenga 2 Start 1; Molde 2 Brann 2.
Sep 12: Sarpsborg 0 Rosenborg 6.

NORWAY

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Molde	22	14	3	5	44	32	45
Tromso	21	11	6	4	41	25	39
Brann	22	10	6	6	38	35	36
Rosenborg	20	9	6	5	46	23	33
Haugesund	22	10	3	9	42	35	33
Stromsgodset	21	9	6	6	33	29	33
Stabaek	21	10	3	8	38	38	33
Valerenga	21	9	5	7	28	25	32
Lillestrom	22	9	4	9	42	37	31
Viking	22	7	6	9	24	31	27
Odd Grenland	21	7	5	9	29	38	26
Aalesund	20	7	4	9	22	29	25
Fredrikstad	21	7	3	11	24	29	24
Sogndal	21	6	6	9	17	22	24
Start	22	5	2	15	28	45	17
Sarpsborg	21	4	4	13	24	47	16

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

POLAND

Aug 19: Zaglebie 0 Podbeskidzie 0; Lech 3 Ruch 0.
Aug 20: Gornik 1 GKS 0; Widzew 1 Polonia 0; Korona 0 Wisla 0.
Aug 21: Jagiellonia 2 Cracovia 1; Legia 1 Slask 2.
Aug 22: Lechia 0 LKS 0.
Aug 26: Gornik 2 Lech 1; Zaglebie 1 Cracovia 1.
Aug 27: Podbeskidzie 2 Korona 3; Polonia 2 GKS 1; Wisla 0 Lechia 1.
Aug 28: Slask 1 Widzew 2; Ruch 1 Jagiellonia 0.
Aug 29: LKS 1 Legia 3.
Sep 9: Ruch 2 Zaglebie 1; Lech 0 Wisla 1.
Sep 10: GKS 0 Widzew 0; Korona 2 Slask 1; Legia 1 Podbeskidzie 2.
Sep 11: Cracovia 0 LKS 1; Jagiellonia 3 Polonia 2.
Sep 12: Lechia 2 Gornik 1.

POLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Korona	6	3	3	0	10	7	12
Jagiellonia	6	3	2	1	10	8	11
Lech	6	3	1	2	13	4	10
Slask	6	3	1	2	10	6	10
Polonia	6	3	1	2	8	6	10
Widzew	6	2	4	0	5	3	10
Ruch	6	3	1	2	7	8	10
Legia	5	3	0	2	11	7	9
Wisla	6	2	3	1	4	3	9
Lechia	6	2	2	2	5	5	8
Gornik	6	2	2	2	7	8	8
Podbeskidzie	6	1	3	2	6	12	6
GKS	6	1	1	4	8	8	4
LKS	6	1	1	4	2	14	4
Zaglebie	5	0	3	2	3	5	3
Cracovia	6	0	2	4	5	10	2

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

PORTUGAL

Aug 19: Porto 3 Gil Vicente 1.
Aug 20: Benfica 3 Feirense 1.
Aug 21: Pacos Ferreira 2 Uniao Leiria 1; Academica 1 Rio Ave 0; Beira Mar 0 Sporting 0; Braga 2 Maritimo 0.
Aug 22: Olhanense 2 Setubal 2.
Aug 27: Gil Vicente 2 Academica 0.
Aug 28: Rio Ave 0 Olhanense 1; Feirense 0 Pacos Ferreira 0; Guimaraes 0 Beira Mar 3; Sporting 2 Maritimo 3.
Aug 29: Setubal 0 Braga 1; Nacional 0 Benfica 2.
Sep 4: Nacional 1 Guimaraes 4.
Sep 6: Uniao Leiria 2 Porto 5.
Sep 9: Porto 3 Setubal 0.
Sep 10: Benfica 2 Guimaraes 1; Pacos Ferreira 2 Sporting 3.
Sep 11: Beira Mar 0 Uniao Leiria 1; Olhanense 1 Feirense 2; Braga 3 Gil Vicente 1; Maritimo 2 Rio Ave 1.
Sep 12: Academica 4 Nacional 0.

PORTUGAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Porto	4	4	0	0	12	3	12
Benfica	4	3	1	0	9	4	10
Braga	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Academica	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Maritimo	4	2	1	1	5	5	7
Beira Mar	4	1	2	1	3	1	5
Sporting	4	1	2	1	6	6	5
Olhanense	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Feirense	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
P Ferreira	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Gil Vicente	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Setubal	4	1	1	2	4	7	4
Guimaraes	4	1	0	3	5	7	3
Uniao Leiria	4	1	0	3	5	9	3
Rio Ave	4	0	1	3	1	4	1
Nacional	4	0	1	3	1	10	1

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Aug 19: St Patrick's 4 Drogheda 0; Dundalk 2 Bray 2; Bohemians 0 Derry 1.
Aug 20: UCD 0 Sligo 1.
Aug 21: Galway 2 Shamrock 3.
Aug 22: St Patrick's 1 Bohemians 1.
Sep 3: Sligo 1 Derry 1; Dundalk 1 Shamrock 2; Bohemians 2 Bray 1; St Patrick's 6 Galway 1; UCD 5 Drogheda 4.
Sep 9: Bray 0 St Patrick's 3; Derry 2 UCD 1; Galway 2 Dundalk 2; Drogheda 0 Bohemians 2; Shamrock 1 Sligo 2.
Sep 12: Bohemians 3 Dundalk 1; Derry 2 Drogheda 2; Sligo 3 Bray 0; UCD 2 Galway 1; St Patrick's 1 Shamrock 1.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Derry	30	16	11	3	55	20	59
Sligo	30	17	7	6	51	15	58
Shamrock	29	17	7	5	50	19	58
St Patrick's	30	15	10	5	54	28	55
Bohemians	29	15	6	8	33	21	51
Dundalk	30	10	11	9	49	40	41
Bray	29	11	5	13	34	41	38
UCD	29	7	4	18	32	67	25
Drogheda	30	5	4	21	25	61	19
Galway	30	1	3	26	18	89	6

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will enter rel/prom play-off

ROMANIA

Aug 19: Tirgu-Mures 2 Mioveni 0.
Aug 20: Otelul 1 Brasov 0; Universitatea 3 Petrolul 2.
Aug 21: Sportul 0 Dinamo 2; Rapid 2 Concordia 0; Vaslui 1 Ceahlaul 2; Astra 2 Steaua 1.
Aug 22: Gaz Metan 3 Vointa 0; Pandurii 2 CFR 0.
Aug 26: CFR 6 Sportul 1.
Aug 27: Vointa 0 Pandurii 0; Astra 0 Universitatea 0.
Aug 28: Brasov 1 Vaslui 2; Ceahlaul 1 Rapid 2; Dinamo 2 Otelul 1; Steaua 2 Tirgu-Mures 0.
Aug 29: Concordia 0 Petrolul 2; Mioveni 4 Gaz Metan 2.
Sep 9: Tirgu-Mures 2 Astra 2; Otelul 0 CFR 4.
Sep 10: Rapid 1 Brasov 1; Gaz Metan 3 Steaua 0.
Sep 11: Sportul 2 Vointa 2; Universitatea 1 Concordia 1; Vaslui 3 Dinamo 1.
Sep 12: Petrolul 0 Ceahlaul 1; Pandurii 5 Mioveni 1.

ROMANIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dinamo	6	5	0	1	13	4	15
Rapid	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
CFR	6	4	0	2	14	5	12
Pandurii	6	3	2	1	10	5	11
Universitatea	6	3	2	1	8	5	11
Steaua	6	3	1	2	10	7	10
Vaslui	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Gaz Metan	6	3	0	3	11	11	9
Ceahlaul	6	2	2	2	6	7	8
Astra	6	2	2	2	5	6	8
Petrolul	6	2	1	3	6	6	7
Brasov	6	2	1	3	6	7	7
Vointa	6	1	4	1	5	7	7
Otelul	6	2	1	3	5	8	7
Tirgu-Mures	6	1	2	3	5	8	5
Sportul	6	1	2	3	6	13	5
Mioveni	6	1	0	5	5	15	3
Concordia	6	0	2	4	2	10	2

34-round season (17x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

RUSSIA

Regular season

Aug 20: Amkar 1 Rubin 1; CSKA 3 Tom 0; Krylia Sovetov 2 Zenit 5; Terek 1 Rostov 1.
Aug 21: Spartak Nalchik 1 Spartak Moscow 1; Kuban 5 Volga 0; Lokomotiv 1 Krasnodar 0; Anzhi 2 Dynamo 1.
Aug 27: Tom 0 Amkar 0; Volga 3 Terek 1; Rostov 1 Anzhi 1.
Aug 28: Dynamo 2 Spartak Nalchik 0; Zenit 5 Krasnodar 0; Rubin 1 Krylia Sovetov 0; Spartak Moscow 2 CSKA 2; Kuban 0 Lokomotiv 1.
Sep 10: CSKA 0 Dynamo 4; Lokomotiv 4 Zenit 2; Krasnodar 3 Rubin 1.
Sep 11: Amkar 0 Spartak Moscow 1; Spartak Nalchik 0 Rostov 1; Krylia Sovetov 2 Tom 0; Anzhi 2 Volga 1.
Sep 12: Terek 1 Kuban 2.

RUSSIA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zenit	23	13	7	3	43	19	46
CSKA	23	13	7	3	42	21	46
Dynamo	23	13	5	5	43	25	44
Anzhi	23	11	7	5	27	20	40
Lokomotiv	23	11	6	6	37	24	39
Spartak M	23	11	6	6	31	25	39
Rubin	23	10	8	5	29	21	38
Kuban	23	11	4	8	31	22	37
Krasnodar	23	7	8	8	27	33	29
Terek	23	6	5	12	21	34	23
Amkar	23	5	8	10	15	29	23
Rostov	23	5	6	12	24	37	21
Volga	23	6	2	15	21	32	20
Tom	23	4	8	11	18	37	20
Krylia Sovetov	23	4	7	12	16	34	19
Spartak N	23	3	8	12	18	30	17

30-round regular season (15x2); top 8 will form championship group, bottom 8 will form relegation group (from which the bottom 2 will go down, 3rd & 4th bottom will enter rel/prom play-offs)

ARGENTINA

Boca hit top form

Boca Juniors' 1-0 win against San Martin gave them sole leadership of the Argentinian top flight for the first time in almost three years. Unbeaten in 16 games, Boca's joy was cut short when Lanus beat Argentinos Juniors 4-0 a day later to join them.

At the other end of the table, Emilio Zelaya's goal for visitors Arsenal Sarandi meant Banfield remained rock bottom without a point or a goal from their opening six games. San Lorenzo fell into the relegation zone for the first time in their history after a 3-1 loss to Colon left them 11th in the apertura but in the play-off position in the average points table.

A ban on away fans at lower-league games has been lifted after 15,000 River Plate supporters defied the ruling and attended their side's first away game since relegation to the second tier, at Independiente Rivadavia.

The Argentinian FA have lifted the ban – which was imposed in July 2007 amid rising violence inside and outside stadiums – for all clubs in the four divisions below the top flight.

Boca boy...Walter Erviti (right)

ECUADOR

Run comes to an end

After eight consecutive victories at the start of the second stage of the season, Deportivo Quito finally dropped points when they were held to a goalless draw away to Guayaquil. However, they are still yet to concede a goal in the competition and are nine points clear of second-placed LDU Quito.

SCOTLAND

Regular season

Aug 20: Dundee United 0 Dunfermline 1; Aberdeen 2 Inverness 1; Hibernian 1 St Mirren 2.
Aug 21: Motherwell 0 Rangers 3; Kilmarnock 0 Hearts 0; Celtic 0 St Johnstone 1.
Aug 27: Dunfermline 2 Motherwell 4; Inverness 2 Kilmarnock 1; St Johnstone 3 Dundee United 3.
Aug 28: St Mirren 0 Celtic 2; Rangers 2 Aberdeen 0; Hearts 2 Hibernian 0.
Sep 10: Dundee United 0 Rangers 1; Celtic 4 Motherwell 0; Inverness 1 Hearts 1; Kilmarnock 3 Dunfermline 2; St Mirren 0 St Johnstone 0.
Sep 11: Hibernian 0 Aberdeen 0.

SCOTLAND – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rangers	6	5	1	0	11	1	16
Celtic	6	5	0	1	14	2	15
Motherwell	7	4	1	2	9	9	13
Kilmarnock	6	2	3	1	9	6	9
Hearts	7	2	3	2	7	4	9
St Mirren	7	2	3	2	4	5	9
Dunfermline	6	2	2	2	9	10	8
St Johnstone	6	1	3	2	4	6	6
Dundee Utd	7	1	3	3	7	12	6
Inverness	7	1	2	4	7	13	5
Aberdeen	7	1	2	4	2	8	5
Hibernian	6	1	1	4	3	10	4

33-round regular season (11x3); top 6 will form championship group, bottom 6 will form relegation group (from which the bottom team will go down)

SERBIA

Aug 20: Novi Pazar 0 Rad 3; Radnicki 1 Spartak 1; Borac 0 Smederevo 1; OFK 2 Jagodina 0; Metalac 0 Vojvodina 3.
Aug 21: Sloboda Sevojno 2 Partizan 1; Hajduk 3 BSK 0; Red Star 2 Javor 0.
Aug 27: Jagodina 0 Hajduk 1; Spartak 0 Metalac 0; Javor 2 Radnicki 4; BSK 0 Borac 0; Vojvodina 3 Novi Pazar 0.
Aug 28: Rad 1 Sloboda Sevojno 2; Smederevo 0 Red Star 1; Partizan 3 OFK 0.
Sep 10: Red Star 2 BSK 0; Radnicki 3 Smederevo 0; Metalac 1 Javor 2; Novi Pazar 0 Spartak 2; Sloboda Sevojno 2 Vojvodina 2; Jagodina 0 Partizan 1.
Sep 11: Hajduk 2 Borac 1; OFK 2 Rad 1.

SERBIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Hajduk	4	4	0	0	9	3	12
Partizan	4	3	0	1	10	2	9
Red Star	4	3	0	1	5	2	9
Vojvodina	4	2	2	0	9	3	8
Radnicki	4	2	2	0	9	4	8
Spartak	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
S Sevojno	4	2	2	0	7	5	8
Rad	4	2	0	2	8	4	6
OFK	4	2	0	2	6	7	6
Smederevo	4	2	0	2	3	5	6
Borac	4	1	1	2	3	3	4
Javor	4	1	0	3	4	9	3
Jagodina	4	0	1	3	1	5	1
BSK	4	0	1	3	1	7	1
Metalac	4	0	1	3	1	8	1
Novi Pazar	4	0	0	4	0	13	0

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SLOVAKIA

Aug 20: Trencin 1 DAC 0; Tatran 1 Ruzomberok 1; Kosice 0 Nitra 2; Senica 0 Dukla 0.
Aug 21: Zilina 0 Spartak 1; Slovan 0 Zlate Moravce 0.
Aug 27: Dukla 1 Zilina 3; Zlate Moravce 0 Senica 0; Nitra 2 Tatran 2; DAC 0 Kosice 1.
Aug 28: Ruzomberok 1 Slovan 0; Spartak 1 Trencin 0.
Sep 9: Senica 2 Ruzomberok 1.
Sep 10: Trencin 4 Kosice 1; Tatran 0 DAC 2; Slovan 0 Nitra 0; Zilina 2 Zlate Moravce 2; Spartak 3 Dukla 1.

SLOVAKIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spartak	8	4	3	1	10	6	15
Slovan	8	4	2	2	11	8	14
Nitra	8	3	4	1	8	4	13
Zilina	8	3	4	1	10	7	13
Zlate Moravce	8	3	4	1	8	6	13
Senica	8	3	3	2	13	7	12
Dukla	8	3	1	4	12	11	10
Ruzomberok	8	2	4	2	7	6	10
Trencin	8	2	3	3	7	10	9
Tatran	8	1	4	3	5	10	7
Kosice	8	1	4	3	6	14	7
DAC	8	1	0	7	5	13	3

33-round season (11x3); bottom team will be relegated

SPAIN

Saturday, August 27

Granada 0
Betis 1 (Ruben Castro 88) Att: 15,000

Sporting Gijon 1 (De las Cuevas pen 67)
Real Sociedad 2 (Agirretxe 35, 65) Att: 18,000

Valencia 4 (Soldado 1, 87, 89, Rami 57)
Racing Santander 3 (Soldado og 6, Acosta 14, Adrian 56) Att: 35,000

Sunday, August 28

Athletic Bilbao 1 (Iturraspe 56)
Rayo Vallecano 1 (Movilla 62) Att: 38,000

Atletico Madrid 0
Osasuna 0 Att: 48,000

Getafe 1 (Fedor 62)
Levante 1 (Juanlu 76) Att: 8,000

Mallorca 1 (De Guzman 61)
Espanyol 0 Att: 12,400

Sevilla 2 (Negredo 1, 26)
Malaga 1 (Cazorla 81) Att: 34,000

Zaragoza 0
Real Madrid 6 (Cristiano Ronaldo 24, 71, 87, Marcelo 27, Xabi Alonso 64, Kaka 82) Att: 28,000

Monday, August 29

Barcelona 5 (Thiago 24, Fabregas 44, Sanchez 47, Messi 52, 73)
Villarreal 0 Att: 95,000

Saturday, September 10

Real Madrid 4 (Benzema 13, 68, Cristiano Ronaldo pen 60, Higuain 87)
Getafe 2 (Fedor 39, 72) Att: 76,000

Real Sociedad 2 (Agirretxe 58, Griezmann 59)
Barcelona 2 (Xavi 9, Fabregas 11) Att: 30,000

Valencia 1 (Soldado 52)
Atletico Madrid 0 Att: 40,000

Villarreal 2 (Rossi pen 35, Marco Ruben 71)
Sevilla 2 (Negredo 24, Alexis 86) Att: 20,000

Sunday, September 11

Betis 1 (Ruben Castro 85)
Mallorca 0 Att: 35,000

Espanyol 2 (Sergio Garcia 24, 72)
Athletic Bilbao 1 (Llorente 62) Att: 21,154

Osasuna 2 (Nino 28, Cejudo 29)
Sporting Gijon 1 (Barral 75) Att: 15,842

Racing Santander 0
Levante 0 Att: 10,500

Rayo Vallecano 0
Zaragoza 0 Att: 13,000

Monday, September 12

Malaga 4 (Cazorla 4, 48, Joaquin 25, 72)
Granada 0 Att: 30,000

SPAIN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Real Madrid	2	2	0	0	10	2	6
Valencia	2	2	0	0	5	3	6
Betis	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Barcelona	2	1	1	0	7	2	4
Sevilla	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Sociedad	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Osasuna	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Malaga	2	1	0	1	5	2	3
Espanyol	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Mallorca	2	1	0	1	1	1	3
Levante	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Vallecano	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Santander	2	0	1	1	3	4	1
Athletic	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Atletico	2	0	1	1	0	1	1
Getafe	2	0	1	1	3	5	1
Villarreal	2	0	1	1	2	7	1
Zaragoza	2	0	1	1	0	6	1
Gijon	2	0	0	2	2	4	0
Granada	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

38-round season (19x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

Leading scorers

4 Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
4 Roberto Soldado (Valencia)
3 Imanol Agirretxe (Real Sociedad)
3 Santiago Cazorla (Malaga)
3 Nicolas Fedor (Getafe)
3 Alvaro Negredo (Sevilla)

SUPER CUP

1st leg

Aug 14
Real Madrid 2 (Ozil 13, Xabi Alonso 54)
Barcelona 2 (Villa 36, Messi 45)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 79,800. **Ref:** Teixeira Vitienes

2nd leg

Aug 17
Barcelona 3 (Iniesta 15, Messi 45, 88)
Real Madrid 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 20, Benzema 81)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 92,965. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan
Barcelona 5-4 on agg
Sent off: Marcelo 90+4min, Ozil 90+5min (both Real Madrid); Villa (Barcelona) 90+5min

SWEDEN

Aug 19: Kalmar 5 Norrkoping 0.
Aug 20: Malmo 2 GAIS 1.
Aug 21: Hacken 2 Djurgarden 0; Syrianska 0 Elfsborg 2; AIK 3 Trelleborg 0; Helsingborg 2 Halmstad 1.
Aug 22: Orebro 0 Mjallby 2; Gothenburg 3 Gefle 0.
Aug 25: Norrkoping 2 Djurgarden 1.
Aug 27: Trelleborg 0 Halmstad 1; Kalmar 0 Gothenburg 0.
Aug 28: Gefle 2 Hacken 2; Helsingborg 2 Orebro 0; AIK 1 Syrianska 0; Malmo 2 Elfsborg 1; GAIS 3 Mjallby 0.
Sep 8: Gefle 2 Malmo 0.
Sep 9: Hacken 1 Helsingborg 1.
Sep 10: Mjallby 0 Norrkoping 0.
Sep 11: Syrianska 2 Kalmar 1; Gothenburg 0 Malmo 0; Djurgarden 4 Trelleborg 3.
Sep 12: Elfsborg 1 GAIS 3; Halmstad 2 Gefle 2; Orebro 1 AIK 2.

SWEDEN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Helsingborg	24	16	7	1	45	19	55
Elfsborg	24	15	3	6	41	24	48
AIK	24	15	2	7	38	22	47
GAIS	24	13	3	8	40	27	42
Hacken	23	11	6	6	44	25	39
Gothenburg	24	10	5	9	33	29	35
Kalmar	24	10	4	10	29	27	34
Malmo	22	9	7	6	23	25	34
Orebro	24	10	2	12	31	33	32
Gefle	24	8	8	8	24	32	32
Mjallby	24	8	4	12	26	32	28
Norrkoping	24	7	5	12	26	41	26
Djurgarden	23	7	4	12	28	34	25
Trelleborg	24	7	2	15	36	55	23
Syrianska	24	6	3	15	22	38	21
Halmstad	24	3	5	16	22	45	14

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated, 3rd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

SWITZERLAND

Aug 20: Servette 3 Grasshopper 4; Lucerne 3 Basle 1; Zurich 0 Xamax 2.
Aug 21: Young Boys 0 Thun 2; Lausanne 0 Sion 2.
Aug 27: Grasshopper 0 Lucerne 1; Xamax 2 Lausanne 2.
Aug 28: Basle 2 Thun 1; Sion 0 Servette 4; Young Boys 2 Zurich 3.
Sep 10: Lucerne 3 Zurich 1; Servette 0 Basle 4.
Sep 11: Lausanne 0 Young Boys 3; Xamax 2 Grasshopper 0; Thun 0 Sion 3.

SWITZERLAND

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lucerne	8	5	3	0	13	4	18
Thun	8	4	2	2	13	8	14
Sion	8	4	2	2	14	10	14
Basle	8	3	3	2	16	12	12
Young Boys	8	3	3	2	13	9	12
Servette	8	3	2	3	16	15	11
Zurich	8	3	0	5	15	14	9
Xamax	8	2	3	3	6	10	9
Grasshopper	8	2	1	5	8	20	7
Lausanne	8	1	1	6	8	20	4

36-round season (9x4); bottom team will be relegated, 2nd bottom will enter rel/prom play-off

TURKEY

Regular season

Sep 10: Eskisehirspor 2 Besiktas 1; Samsunspor 3 Genclerbirligi 2; Manisaspor 1 Trabzonspor 1; Ankaragucu 1 Mersin 2.
Sep 11: Karabukspor 2 Sivasspor 1; Bursaspor 3 Kayserispor 0; Antalyaspor 1 Gaziantepspor 0; Istanbul BB 2 Galatasaray 0.
Sep 12: Fenerbahce 1 Orduspor 0.

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Third time lucky...Galindo

MEXICO

Santos switch again

Santos Laguna, who have managed just eight points from their seven apertura games so far this season, have named former international Benjamin Galindo as their third coach of the year.

The 50-year-old, who played at the 1994 World Cup, failed to win any of his seven games in charge during a previous spell with the club in 2006.

USA

Galaxy go through

LA Galaxy become the first team to secure a place in the MLS Cup play-offs, with a 1-0 win over Colorado Rapids. Galaxy have also agreed to meet Melbourne Victory in a friendly, in Australia, on December 6.

Landon Donovan and Thierry Henry, who have 12 goals each, currently lead the race to finish MLS' top scorer. Meanwhile, Columbus Crew striker Jeff Cunningham's penalty in his side's 6-2 loss to Seattle Sounders was the 134th MLS goal of his career, making the 35-year-old the competition's all-time record goalscorer.

Joint first...Donovan's dozen

TURKEY – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bursaspor	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Istanbul BB	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Samsunspor	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Eskisehirspor	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Karabukspor	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Mersin	1	1	0	0	2	1	3
Antalyaspor	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Fenerbahce	1	1	0	0	1	0	3
Manisaspor	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Trabzonspor	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Genclerbirligi	1	0	0	1	2	3	0
Ankaragucu	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Besiktas	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Sivasspor	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
Gaziantepspor	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Orduspor	1	0	0	1	0	1	0
Galatasaray	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Kayserispor	1	0	0	1	0	3	0

34-round regular season (17x2); top 4 will form championship group, 5th to 8th will form Europa League place group, bottom 3 will be relegated

UKRAINE

Aug 19: Zorya 0 Arsenal 3.
Aug 20: Oleksandria 1 Obolon 0; Chornomorets 0 Volyn 0.
Aug 21: Vorskla 0 Dnipro 0; Tavriya 1 Karpaty 1; Shakhtar 3 Illichivets 0; Metalist 2 Metalurh 0; Dynamo 1 Kryvbas 0.
Aug 26: Metalurh 3 Oleksandria 1; Volyn 1 Obolon 1.
Aug 27: Kryvbas 2 Zorya 1; Arsenal 2 Tavriya 3.
Aug 28: Illichivets 4 Vorskla 1; Dnipro 0 Dynamo 4; Chornomorets 2 Shakhtar 2; Karpaty 1 Metalist 2.
Sep 9: Shakhtar 5 Volyn 1; Tavriya 1 Kryvbas 2.
Sep 10: Vorskla 3 Chornomorets 1; Oleksandria 1 Karpaty 1; Metalist 0 Arsenal 0.
Sep 11: Zorya 2 Dnipro 0; Obolon 0 Metalurh 1; Dynamo 3 Illichivets 1.

UKRAINE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Shakhtar	9	7	2	0	24	6	23
Dynamo	9	7	2	0	20	3	23
Metalist	9	5	4	0	16	8	19
Kryvbas	9	5	1	3	9	8	16
Tavriya	9	3	5	1	13	9	14
Vorskla	9	4	2	3	11	10	14
Arsenal	9	3	4	2	14	9	13
Volyn	9	3	3	3	11	15	12
Zorya	9	3	1	5	10	13	10
Metalurh	9	3	1	5	8	13	10
Dnipro	9	2	3	4	11	15	9
Illichivets	9	2	2	5	9	16	8
Oleksandria	9	2	2	5	7	14	8
Karpaty	9	1	3	5	7	13	6
Chornomorets	9	0	5	4	6	13	5
Obolon	9	0	4	5	4	15	4

30-round season (15x2); bottom 2 will be relegated

SOUTH AMERICA

RECOPA

(2010 Libertadores Cup winners, Internacional v 2010 Sudamericana Cup winners, Independiente)

1st leg
Aug 10
Independiente (Arg) 2 (M Velazquez 42, M Perez 72)
Internacional (Bra) 1 (Leandro Damiao 37)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Roldan (Col)

2nd leg
Aug 24
Internacional 3 (Leandro Damiao 21, 25, Kleber pen 83)
Independiente 1 (M Velazquez 49)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Internacional 4-3 on agg

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round

1st legs - Aug 2-18; 2nd legs - Aug 11-25
Bella Vista (Uru) v Universidad Catolica (Chl) 1-1, 0-3 (agg 1-4); Cesar Vallejo (Per) v Independiente Santa Fe (Col) 1-1, 0-2 (agg 1-3); Deportivo Quito (Ecu) v Anzoategui (Ven) 1-0, 0-2 (agg 1-2); La Equidad (Col) v Juan Aurich (Per) 2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1); Olimpia (Par) v The Strongest (Bol) 2-0, 1-2 (agg 3-2); San Jose (Bol) v Nacional (Par) 0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1); Universidad de Chile (Chl) v Fenix (Uru) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Yaracuyanos (Ven) v LDU Quito (Ecu) 1-1, 0-1 (agg 1-2)

ARGENTINA

Apertura

Monday, August 15
Atletico Rafaela 1 (Castro pen 75)
Arsenal 3 (Obolo 13, Leguizamon 18, 33)

Boca Juniors 4 (Viatri 1, 80, Riquelme 84, Colazo 86)
Union 0

Estudiantes 0
San Lorenzo 2 (Gigliotti 60, Mendez 62)

Velez Sarsfield 3 (Silva pen 23, Ortiz 50, Martinez 83)
Banfield 0

Tuesday, August 16
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Mateo og 29)
Newell's Old Boys 1 (Sperdutti 42)

Lanus 1 (Pavone 90+2)
Independiente 0

San Martin 2 (Roberval 40, Landa 84)
Tigre 1 (Pio 90+1)

Wednesday, August 17
Belgrano 1 (Vazquez 56)
Olimpo 1 (Rolle 8)

Colon 1 (Matos og 15)
All Boys 1 (Matos 75)

Racing Club 3 (Gutierrez 12, 76, Castro 71)
Godoy Cruz 0

Friday, August 19
Arsenal 0
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Franco 90+1)

Saturday, August 20
Independiente 1 (Perez 47)
Estudiantes 0

San Lorenzo 3 (Gigliotti 25, Romeo 79, Tellechea 90+3)
Argentinos Juniors 1 (Morales 69)

San Martin 0
Lanus 0

Sunday, August 21
All Boys 1 (Matos 1)
Atletico Rafaela 2 (Gonzalez 75, Gaitan 86)

Banfield 0
Racing Club 1 (Cahais 7)

Newell's Old Boys 0
Boca Juniors 1 (Mouche 87)

Tigre 2 (Maggiolo 23, 63)
Godoy Cruz 1 (Villar 70)

Monday, August 22
Olimpo 0
Colon 1 (Moreno y Fabianesi 49)

Union 0
Belgrano 0

Friday, August 26
Estudiantes 2 (Fernandez 8, Boselli 20)
San Martin 2 (Mas 45, Nunez 67)

Godoy Cruz 1 (Ramirez 54)
Banfield 0

Racing Club 0
Arsenal 0

Saturday, August 27
Atletico Rafaela 3 (Castro 39, Gandin pen 68, Serrano 76)
Olimpo 1 (Bareiro 90)

Lanus 0
Tigre 0

Velez Sarsfield 0
All Boys 1 (Perea 68)

Sunday, August 28
Argentinos Juniors 0
Independiente 0

Belgrano 2 (Turus 9, Maldonado 14)
Newell's Old Boys 3 (Aquino 43, Noir 67, 70)

Boca Juniors 1 (Cvitanich 50)
San Lorenzo 1 (Mendez 30)

Colon 0
Union 2 (Rosales 9, Montero 18)

Friday, September 2
Newell's Old Boys 0
Colon 0

San Lorenzo 0
Belgrano 1 (Mansanelli 40)

Tigre 1 (Echeverria 32)
Banfield 0

Saturday, September 3
All Boys 0
Racing Club 0

Arsenal 1 (Obolo 90+4)
Godoy Cruz 2 (Navarro 54, Ramirez 90+3)

Lanus 2 (Regueiro 14, Romero 30)
Estudiantes 1 (Gonzalez 29)

Sunday, September 4
Independiente 0
Boca Juniors 1 (Schiavi 50)

Olimpo 2 (Rolle 11, Bareiro 70)
Velez Sarsfield 1 (Franco 40)

San Martin 0
Argentinos Juniors 0

Union 0
Atletico Rafaela 1 (Cardenas og 18)

Wednesday, September 7
Independiente 2 (Pellerano 21, Cantero og 41)
San Martin 1 (Garcia 53)

Friday, September 9
Atletico Rafaela 0
Newell's Old Boys 0

Colon 3 (Fuertes 22, 49, Higuain 87)
San Lorenzo 1 (Gigliotti 67)

Saturday, September 10
Estudiantes 1 (Casteglione og 61)
Tigre 3 (Luna 6, Morales pen 22, Martinez 25)

Godoy Cruz 6 (Ramirez 29, 46, Perea og 45, Caruso 53, Villar 59, Curbelo 87)
All Boys 1 (Dominguez 23)

Racing Club 1 (Gutierrez pen 19)
Olimpo 0

Sunday, September 11
Banfield 0
Arsenal 1 (Zelaya 7)

Belgrano 2 (Pereyra 38, 46)
Independiente 0

Boca Juniors 1 (Erviti 75)
San Martin 0

Velez Sarsfield 0
Union 1 (Rosales 87)

Monday, September 12
Argentinos Juniors 0
Lanus 4 (Regueiro 37, Pavone 78, Gonzalez 81, Valeri pen 88)

ARGENTINA – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Boca	6	4	2	0	8	1	14
Lanus	6	4	2	0	8	1	14
Rafaela	6	4	1	1	9	5	13
Racing	6	3	3	0	6	1	12
Tigre	6	3	2	1	8	5	11
Colon	6	3	2	1	7	5	11
Godoy Cruz	6	3	1	2	11	8	10
Belgrano	6	2	3	1	7	5	9
Union	6	2	2	2	4	6	8
Velez	6	2	1	3	6	5	7
San Lorenzo	6	2	1	3	7	7	7
Arsenal	6	2	1	3	6	6	7
Newell's	6	1	4	1	4	4	7
Independiente	6	2	1	3	3	5	7
San Martin	6	1	3	2	5	6	6
All Boys	6	1	3	2	5	10	6
Olimpo	6	1	2	3	4	7	5
Argentinos	6	0	4	2	3	9	4
Estudiantes	6	0	2	4	4	10	2
Banfield	6	0	0	6	0	9	0

19-round tournament (19x1); no relegation after apertura

Leading scorers
5 Ruben Ramirez (Godoy Cruz)
4 Teofilo Gutierrez (Racing Club)

Winning goal...Manyisa

SENEGAL

First title win

Dakar-based US Ouakam are the new champions of Senegal for the first time in their 60-year history.

SOUTH AFRICA

Pirates beat Chiefs

Oupa Manyisa scored the only goal of the game as Orlando Pirates beat arch-rivals Kaizer Chiefs in the Top 8 Cup Final.

CAMBODIA

Booth successful

Englishman David Booth, who has managed Grimsby Town and Darlington, led Phnom Penh Crown to the title in his first season. The defending champions finished four points clear of runners-up Naga Corp.

CHINA

Newboys still lead

Runaway league leaders Guangzhou moved 12 points ahead of Beijing Guoan and stretched their unbeaten run to 22 games with a 2-0 home win over defending champions Shandong Luneng.

With eight matches to go, Guangzhou are on course to make history as the first promoted side to win the Chinese title.

IRAQ

Keeper saves the day

Al Zawraa beat Arbil 5-4 in a penalty shoot-out to win the Iraqi championship play-off Final.

Goalkeeper Ammar Ali saved Nabeel Sabah's spot-kick before Haidar Sabah clinched the title

CLUB FOOTBALL

BRAZIL

Aug 17: Ceara 3 Gremio 0; Avai 0 Vasco da Gama 2; Fluminense 3 Figueirense 0; Paranaense 2 Cruzeiro 1; Atletico Mineiro 2 Corinthians 3; Internacional 1 Botafogo 0; Santos 2 Coritiba 3.
Aug 18: America 1 Sao Paulo 1; Flamengo 1 Goianiense 4; Palmeiras 1 Bahia 1.
Aug 20: Cruzeiro 1 Ceara 0; Botafogo 3 Atletico Mineiro 1; Corinthians 0 Figueirense 2.
Aug 21: Sao Paulo 1 Palmeiras 1; Goianiense 1 Gremio 0; Avai 0 Coritiba 0; Internacional 2 Flamengo 2; Bahia 1 Santos 2; Paranaense 2 America 2; Vasco da Gama 1 Fluminense 1.
Aug 24: Santos 2 Fluminense 1.
Aug 27: Coritiba 1 Paranaense 1; America 1 Goianiense 2; Fluminense 1 Botafogo 2.
Aug 28: Palmeiras 2 Corinthians 1; Santos 1 Sao Paulo 1; Flamengo 0 Vasco da Gama 0; Gremio 2 Internacional 1; Ceara 3 Bahia 0; Atletico Mineiro 1 Cruzeiro 2; Figueirense 2 Avai 3.
Aug 31: Corinthians 3 Gremio 2; Vasco da Gama 3 Ceara 1; Cruzeiro 2 Figueirense 4; Goianiense 3 Coritiba 1; Paranaense 0 Atletico Mineiro 1; Sao Paulo 1 Fluminense 2; Botafogo 3 Palmeiras 1; Internacional 3 Santos 3; Avai 3 Flamengo 2.
Sep 1: Bahia 0 America 0.
Sep 3: Fluminense 3 Goianiense 2; Atletico Mineiro 2 Avai 0; Figueirense 1 Sao Paulo 2.
Sep 4: Palmeiras 1 Cruzeiro 1; Flamengo 1 Bahia 3; Gremio 4 Paranaense 0; Coritiba 1 Corinthians 0; America 4 Vasco da Gama 1; Ceara 1 Internacional 1.
Sep 7: Sao Paulo 2 Atletico Mineiro 1; Botafogo 4 Ceara 0; Internacional 4 America 2; Avai 1 Santos 2; Cruzeiro 1 Fluminense 2; Paranaense 2 Palmeiras 2; Goianiense 1 Figueirense 1.
Sep 8: Vasco da Gama 2 Coritiba 0; Bahia 1 Gremio 2; Corinthians 2 Flamengo 1.
Sep 10: Santos 1 Cruzeiro 0; America 2 Avai 2.
Sep 11: Palmeiras 0 Internacional 3; Fluminense 1 Corinthians 0; Ceara 1 Goianiense 1; Coritiba 5 Botafogo 0; Figueirense 1 Vasco da Gama 1; Flamengo 1 Paranaense 2; Gremio 1 Sao Paulo 0; Atletico Mineiro 2 Bahia 0.

BRAZIL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Corinthians	23	13	4	6	35	23	43
Vasco	23	12	6	5	33	27	42
Sao Paulo	23	12	5	6	35	28	41
Botafogo	22	12	4	6	36	25	40
Fluminense	23	12	1	10	30	26	37
Flamengo	23	9	9	5	38	31	36
Internacional	23	9	8	6	39	30	35
Palmeiras	23	8	10	5	29	23	34
Coritiba	23	9	5	9	39	29	32
Figueirense	23	8	7	8	28	30	31
Goianiense	23	8	6	9	29	27	30
Gremio	22	8	6	8	27	27	30
Santos	21	8	5	8	29	32	29
Cruzeiro	23	8	4	11	30	28	28
Ceara	23	7	6	10	30	37	27
At Mineiro	23	7	3	13	30	40	24
Bahia	23	5	9	9	25	32	24
Paranaense	23	5	7	11	24	36	22
Avai	23	5	6	12	27	48	21
America	23	3	9	11	30	44	18

38-round season (19x2); bottom 4 will be relegated

CHILE

CHILE – CLAUSURA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Univ Chile	7	7	0	0	18	2	21
Colo Colo	7	5	1	1	15	10	16
Univ Catolica	7	4	2	1	13	5	14
Audax Italiano	7	3	3	1	15	9	12
Cobreloa	7	3	2	2	12	10	11
Cobresal	7	3	1	3	8	9	10
Iquique	7	3	0	4	14	18	9
O'Higgins	7	2	3	2	9	8	9
U Concepcion	7	2	3	2	8	7	9
Huachipato	7	2	2	3	11	11	8
La Serena	7	2	2	3	8	11	8
Wanderers	7	2	2	3	7	10	8
U Espanola	7	1	4	2	8	7	7
Palestino	7	1	4	2	7	9	7
Morning	7	2	0	5	10	16	6
La Calera	7	1	3	3	3	7	6
San Felipe	7	1	3	3	7	15	6
Nublense	7	1	1	5	7	16	4

Standings on Sep 13

17-round regular season (17x1); top 8 will enter championship play-offs; the 2 teams with fewest points in combined apertura/clausura table will be relegated. 3rd & 4th fewest will enter rel/prom play-offs

ECUADOR

ECUADOR – 2ND STAGE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dep Quito	9	8	1	0	14	0	25
LDU Quito	9	5	1	3	14	8	16
El Nacional	9	5	1	3	16	14	16
Barcelona	9	4	3	2	10	7	15
Emelec	9	4	2	3	14	6	14
Independiente	9	4	2	3	12	11	14
Olmedo	9	4	1	4	10	9	13
Cuenca	9	3	3	3	9	9	12
LDU Loja	9	2	2	5	11	15	8
Imbabura	9	2	1	6	5	15	7
Espoli	9	1	3	5	5	13	6
Manta	9	1	2	6	3	16	5

Standings on Sep 13

22-round tournament (11x2); the 2 teams with fewest points in combined 1st/2nd stage table will be relegated

URUGUAY

Apertura

Aug 20: Wanderers 3 Cerro Largo 2; Nacional 2 Defensor 2.
Aug 21: Rampla 0 Cerro 1; Rentistas 0 Danubio 1; Penarol 2 El Tanque Sisley 0; Cerrito 0 Racing 0; Liverpool 1 River Plate 2; Fenix 2 Bella Vista 1.
Aug 25: Bella Vista 0 Penarol 3.
Aug 27: River Plate 2 Rentistas 0; Cerro 0 Nacional 0; El Tanque Sisley 0 Liverpool 1.
Aug 28: Racing 1 Rampla 3; Wanderers 4 Bella Vista 0; Cerro Largo 0 Penarol 0; Defensor 1 Cerrito 1; Danubio 4 Fenix 0.
Sep 3: Cerrito 0 El Tanque Sisley 1; Fenix 1 Cerro Largo 1; Penarol 1 Defensor 0.
Sep 4: Rentistas 1 Cerro 0; Nacional 3 Racing 2; Rampla 0 Danubio 0; Liverpool 2 Bella Vista 0; Wanderers 0 River Plate 3.
Sep 10: Cerro 1 Wanderers 0; Danubio 1 Nacional 1; El Tanque Sisley 2 Rentistas 0.
Sep 11: Bella Vista 0 Cerrito 1; Cerro Largo 1 Liverpool 0; River Plate 2 Rampla 1; Defensor 0 Fenix 1; Racing 2 Penarol 2.

URUGUAY – APERTURA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
River Plate	5	4	1	0	12	5	13
Penarol	5	3	2	0	8	2	11
Danubio	5	3	2	0	7	1	11
Cerro	5	3	1	1	5	2	10
Fenix	5	3	1	1	6	6	10
Cerro Largo	5	2	2	1	5	4	8
Nacional	5	1	4	0	9	8	7
Liverpool	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Wanderers	5	2	0	3	7	7	6
Tanque Sisley	5	2	0	3	3	5	6
Defensor	5	1	2	2	5	5	5
Cerrito	5	1	2	2	3	5	5
Rampla	5	1	1	3	4	6	4
Racing	5	0	3	2	6	9	3
Rentistas	5	1	0	4	1	6	3
Bella Vista	5	0	0	5	1	12	0

15-round tournament (15x1); no relegation after apertura

CONCACAF

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A

Aug 16: Alajuelense (CR) 1 Monarcas Morelia (Mex) 0; Los Angeles Galaxy (USA) 2 Motagua (Hnd) 0.
Aug 25: Los Angeles Galaxy 2 Alajuelense 0; Morelia 4 Motagua 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Morelia	2	1	0	1	4	1	3
Alajuelense	2	1	0	1	1	2	3
Motagua	2	0	0	2	0	6	0

Group B

Aug 16: Santos Laguna (Mex) 3 Real Espana (Hnd) 2.
Aug 17: Colorado Rapids (USA) 3 Isidro Metapan (ESv) 2.
Aug 23: Real Espana 1 Colorado Rapids 1.
Aug 24: Isidro Metapan 2 Santos Laguna 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Colorado	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Metapan	2	1	0	1	4	3	3
Santos	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Real Espana	2	0	1	1	3	4	1

Group C

Aug 17: Pumas UNAM (Mex) 0 Dallas (USA) 1.
Aug 18: Tauro (Pan) 1 Toronto (Can) 2.
Aug 25: Tauro 0 Pumas UNAM 0; Toronto 0 Dallas 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Dallas	2	2	0	0	2	0	6
Toronto	2	1	0	1	2	2	3
Tauro	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Pumas	2	0	1	1	0	1	1

Group D

Aug 16: Seattle Sounders (USA) 4 Comunicaciones (Gtm) 1.
Aug 17: Herediano (CR) 0 Monterrey (Mex) 5.
Aug 23: Monterrey 0 Seattle Sounders 1.
Aug 24: Comunicaciones 2 Herediano 0.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Seattle	2	2	0	0	5	1	6
Monterrey	2	1	0	1	5	1	3
Comunic'nes	2	1	0	1	3	4	3
Herediano	2	0	0	2	0	7	0

Top 2 in each group qualify for quarter-finals

MEXICO

Apertura

Regular season

Aug 19: Tecos 2 Pachuca 1.
Aug 20: Cruz Azul 2 Tijuana 1; Queretaro 1 Jaguares 2; Guadalajara 2 Monterrey 1; Tigres 1 San Luis 0.
Aug 21: Puebla 2 Pumas 1; Toluca 2 Atlante 1; America 5 Atlas 2.
Aug 26: Jaguares 1 Toluca 1.
Aug 27: Pachuca 2 America 0; Monterrey 2 Santos 0; Atlas 0 Tigres 1; San Luis 2 Guadalajara 0; Atlante 2 Tecos 1.
Aug 28: Pumas 1 Cruz Azul 2; Tijuana 1 Queretaro 1; Morelia 0 Puebla 0.
Sep 2: Tijuana 0 Guadalajara 1; Jaguares 3 Santos 2.
Sep 4: San Luis 2 Morelia 3.
Sep 9: Tecos 0 Jaguares 2.
Sep 10: Queretaro 4 Pumas 0; Cruz Azul 0 Morelia 1; Tigres 5 Pachuca 0; Santos 1 Guadalajara 1; Atlas 1 San Luis 1.
Sep 11: Toluca 1 Tijuana 1; Puebla 3 Monterrey 3; America 0 Atlante 1.

MEXICO – APERTURA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guadalajara	8	5	2	1	10	6	17
Tigres	8	4	4	0	13	5	16
Cruz Azul	8	4	2	2	10	8	14
Jaguares	8	4	2	2	13	12	14
Monterrey	8	4	1	3	17	11	13
Queretaro	8	3	2	3	12	10	11
Toluca	8	2	5	1	9	10	11
Pumas	8	3	2	3	8	10	11
San Luis	7	3	1	3	8	8	10
Morelia	7	3	1	3	7	8	10
Puebla	8	2	4	2	11	14	10
Pachuca	8	3	1	4	11	15	10
Tecos	8	3	0	5	9	11	9
Atlante	8	3	0	5	11	14	9
Santos	7	2	2	3	12	11	8
America	7	2	2	3	11	11	8
Tijuana	8	1	3	4	10	13	6
Atlas	8	1	2	5	7	12	5

17-round regular season (17x1); top 8 will enter championship play-offs; no relegation after apertura

UNITED STATES

Regular season

Aug 17: New England 1 Houston 1; Kansas City 3 Portland 1.
Aug 18: Chicago 1 DC United 1.
Aug 20: New England 2 New York 2; Columbus 2 Philadelphia 1; Houston 3 Salt Lake 2; Colorado 2 Chivas 2; Dallas 0 Seattle 1; Portland 2 Vancouver 1; Los Angeles 2 San Jose 0.
Aug 21: Chicago 2 Toronto 0; Kansas City 1 DC United 0.
Aug 24: Portland 1 Chivas 0.
Aug 27: Seattle 6 Columbus 2; Toronto 1 San Jose 1; Vancouver 1 Houston 0; Chicago 2 Colorado 0; Kansas City 2 Dallas 3; Chivas 0 Salt Lake 1.
Sep 3: Salt Lake 2 Philadelphia 1.
Sep 5: Kansas City 2 Los Angeles 2.
Sep 7: Philadelphia 4 New England 4.

for the club from Baghdad.

"Arbil are a strong side and have embarrassed our team on a number of occasions, but it was our destiny to win the title after playing so well," said Al Zawraa coach Radhi Shenaishil.

"I'm pleased with the side's performance and delighted that Al Zawraa have taken their 12th title and their first with me."

Winning ways...Maradona on the sidelines against Ittihad Kalba

UAE

Maradona's new start

Diego Maradona got off to a winning start as coach of Al Wasl as his side scored two late goals to beat Ittihad Kalba 3-1 in a pre-season friendly.

The new league season begins on October 13, with Maradona's Al Wasl at home to Al Sharjah. Al Jazira are the defending champions.

Sep 9: Los Angeles 1 Colorado 0.
Sep 10: Kansas City 3 Houston 0; Seattle 1 Salt Lake 2; New York 1 Vancouver 1; Philadelphia 0 Portland 0; Columbus 2 Toronto 4; New England 2 Dallas 0; Chivas 0 DC United 3; San Jose 2 Chicago 0.

USA – REGULAR – EASTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Kansas City	28	10	10	8	43	36	40
Columbus	27	11	7	9	33	34	40
Philadelphia	27	8	12	7	35	30	36
Houston	28	8	11	9	34	36	35
DC United	25	8	10	7	37	35	34
New York	27	6	15	6	42	38	33
Chicago	27	4	15	8	30	35	27
New England	28	5	12	11	32	43	27
Toronto	29	5	12	12	30	51	27

USA – REGULAR – WESTERN CONFERENCE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Los Angeles	28	15	10	3	40	22	55
Seattle	28	13	9	6	43	31	48
Dallas	28	13	7	8	36	31	46
Salt Lake	26	13	6	7	37	22	45
Colorado	29	10	11	8	39	37	41
Portland	27	9	6	12	33	41	33
Chivas	28	7	10	11	32	33	31
San Jose	27	6	11	10	29	35	29
Vancouver	27	4	10	13	28	43	22

34-round regular season (17x2); top 3 in each conference will enter championship play-offs automatically, the other 4 teams with most points – regardless of conference – will meet in 2 head-to-head ties, the winners of which will also enter championship play-offs; no relegation from this league

AFRICA

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Group A
Aug 26: Raja Casablanca (Mor) 0 Enyimba (Nga) 0.
Aug 28: Cotonsport (Cam) 2 Al Hilal (Sud) 0.
Sep 9: Al Hilal 1 Enyimba 2.
Sep 10: Cotonsport 2 Raja Casablanca 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Enyimba	5	3	2	0	9	5	11
Cotonsport	5	2	1	2	7	6	7
Al Hilal	5	2	1	2	6	7	7
Raja	5	0	2	3	1	5	2

Group B
Aug 27: Esperance (Tun) 0 Wydad Casablanca (Mor) 0.
Aug 28: Mouloudia (Alg) 0 Al Ahly (Egy) 0.
Sep 10: Esperance 4 Mouloudia 0.
Sep 11: Wydad Casablanca 1 Al Ahly 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Esperance	5	2	3	0	8	3	9
Wydad	5	1	4	0	10	6	7
Al Ahly	5	1	3	1	6	5	6
Mouloudia	5	0	2	3	1	11	2

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

CONFEDERATION CUP

Group A
Aug 28: InterClube (Ang) 2 Club Africain (Tun) 1; Kaduna United (Nga) 2 ASEC Abidjan (IvC) 1.
Sep 11: Club Africain 1 ASEC Abidjan 0; InterClube 4 Kaduna United 1.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
InterClube	5	3	1	1	8	5	10
Club Africain	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Kaduna Utd	5	1	2	2	5	8	5
ASEC Abidjan	5	1	1	3	4	6	4

Group B
Aug 27: Motema Pembe (DRC) 2 JS Kabylie (Alg) 0; Sunshine Stars (Nga) 1 Maghreb Fes (Mor) 1.
Sep 10: JS Kabylie 0 Maghreb Fes 1.
Sep 11: Motema Pembe 0 Sunshine Stars 0.

CONFEDERATION CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Maghreb Fes	5	3	2	0	5	2	11
Motema Pembe	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
Sunshine Stars	5	2	2	1	5	3	8
JS Kabylie	5	0	0	5	1	8	0

Top 2 in both groups qualify for semi-finals

ASIA

JAPAN

Aug 17: Gamba 2 Nagoya 2; Kashima 2 Cerezo 1.
Aug 20: Ventforet 3 Urawa 2; Gamba 6 Kawasaki 3; Shimizu 3 Cerezo 3; Kashima 2 Sanfrecce 0; Omiya 1 Montedio 1; Kashiwa 3 Avispa 2; Yokohama 1 Jubilo 0; Nagoya 0 Vegalta 1; Vissel 2 Albirex 1.
Aug 24: Ventforet 1 Kashima 1; Avispa 2 Vissel 2; Kawasaki 1 Nagoya 2; Jubilo 1 Vegalta 1; Gamba 2 Kashiwa 0; Albirex 0 Omiya 0; Montedio 1 Shimizu 1; Urawa 1 Sanfrecce 1; Yokohama 2 Cerezo 1.
Aug 27: Sanfrecce 1 Albirex 0; Shimizu 0 Yokohama 0; Omiya 2 Jubilo 0; Vegalta 2 Montedio 1.
Aug 28: Kashiwa 3 Kawasaki 2; Cerezo 3 Urawa 1; Vissel 0 Gamba 4; Kashima 6 Avispa 0; Nagoya 4 Ventforet 1.
Sep 10: Avispa 0 Yokohama 1; Cerezo 5 Sanfrecce 4; Gamba 2 Omiya 0; Jubilo 2 Shimizu 1; Albirex 2 Kashima 2; Kashiwa 2 Nagoya 1.
Sep 11: Urawa 0 Montedio 1; Ventforet 1 Vegalta 2; Kawasaki 0 Vissel 3.

JAPAN

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gamba	25	16	5	4	63	41	53
Yokohama	25	15	5	5	36	22	50
Kashiwa	25	16	2	7	45	35	50
Nagoya	25	14	7	4	47	27	49
Kashima	25	11	6	8	44	33	39
Vegalta	25	9	11	5	27	22	38
Sanfrecce	25	10	6	9	36	36	36
Vissel	25	10	5	10	33	32	35
Jubilo	25	9	7	9	41	30	34
Shimizu	25	8	9	8	30	39	33
Cerezo	25	8	8	9	47	39	32
Kawasaki	25	9	3	13	41	45	30
Albirex	25	7	8	10	27	29	29
Urawa	25	6	10	9	31	32	28
Omiya	25	6	10	9	25	36	28
Ventforet	25	5	6	14	28	51	21
Montedio	25	5	5	15	21	37	20
Avispa	25	3	3	19	19	55	12

34-round season (17x2); bottom 3 will be relegated

SOUTH KOREA

Regular season
Aug 20: Suwon 3 Sangju 0; Jeju 0 Seoul 3; Incheon 0 Gangwon 0; Daejeon 1 Ulsan 0; Seongnam 1 Gyeongnam 1.
Aug 21: Jeonbuk 3 Pohang 1; Chunnam 1 Busan 1.
Aug 27: Seongnam 1 Daegu 0; Busan 2 Jeonbuk 3; Gwangju 2 Jeju 2; Incheon 2 Daejeon 0; Ulsan 1 Suwon 1; Pohang 1 Gyeongnam 0; Sangju 0 Chunnam 1; Seoul 6 Gangwon 3.
Sep 9: Jeonbuk 4 Incheon 2; Daegu 2 Seoul 1.
Sep 10: Jeju 1 Ulsan 2; Pohang 5 Gwangju 1; Suwon 3 Seongnam 2; Gangwon 2 Sangju 0.
Sep 11: Chunnam 2 Gyeongnam 0; Busan 1 Daejeon 0.

SOUTH KOREA – REGULAR

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jeonbuk	24	16	5	3	56	27	53
Pohang	24	13	7	4	48	27	46
Seoul	24	12	6	6	43	33	42
Suwon	24	12	3	9	42	30	39
Chunnam	24	11	6	7	27	20	39
Busan	24	11	6	7	41	36	39
Jeju	24	9	8	7	39	36	35
Gyeongnam	24	9	5	10	33	33	32
Ulsan	24	9	5	10	25	27	32
Incheon	24	6	12	6	29	32	30
Daegu	23	7	7	9	29	36	28
Seongnam	24	6	8	10	32	35	26
Sangju	24	6	7	11	29	38	25
Gwangju	23	6	6	11	23	37	24
Daejeon	24	5	7	12	26	48	22
Gangwon	24	2	4	18	11	38	10

30-round regular season (15x2); top 6 will enter championship play-offs

FORTHCOMING FIXTURES

September 30-October 2
CAF Champions League semi-finals, 1st leg
October 7-9
European Championship qualifiers; African Nations Cup qualifiers (last group games); World Cup qualifiers
October 8
Australian A-League starts
October 11
European Championship qualifiers (last group games); World Cup qualifiers
October 14-16
CAF Champions League semi-finals, 2nd leg
October 18-19
UEFA Champions League group games
October 18-28
Pan-American Games
October 18–20
CONCACAF Champions League (last group games)
October 19
AFC Champions League semi-finals, 1st leg
October 20
Europa League group games
October 26
AFC Champions League semi-finals, 2nd leg

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SQUADS: PREMIER LEAGUE 2011-12

* players who do not fulfil the home-grown criteria

ARSENAL

GOALKEEPERS

1	* Manuel ALMUNIA (Spa)	19.05.77
21	* Lukasz FABIANSKI (Pol)	18.04.85
24	Vito MANNONE (Ita)	02.03.88
13	Wojciech SZCZESNY (Pol)	18.04.90

DEFENDERS

11	* ANDRE SANTOS (Bra)	08.03.83
20	Johan DJOUROU (Swi)	18.01.87
28	Kieran GIBBS	26.09.89
25	Carl JENKINSON (Fin)	08.02.92
6	* Laurent KOSCIELNY (Fra)	10.09.85
4	* Per MERTESACKER (Ger)	29.09.84
3	* Bacary SAGNA (Fra)	14.02.83
18	* Sebastien SQUILLACI (Fra)	11.08.80
5	* Thomas VERMAELEN (Blg)	14.11.85

MIDFIELDERS

8	* Mikel ARTETA (Spa)	26.03.82
30	* Yossi BENAYOUN (Isr)	05.05.80
2	* Abou DIABY (Fra)	11.05.86
40	Craig EASTMOND	09.12.90
26	Emmanuel FRIMPONG	10.01.92
16	Aaron RAMSEY (Wal)	26.12.90
7	* Tomas ROSICKY (CzR)	04.10.80
17	Alex SONG (Cam)	09.09.87
19	Jack WILSHERE	01.01.92

FORWARDS

23	* Andrei ARSHAVIN (Rus)	29.05.81
29	* Marouane CHAMAKH (Mor)	10.01.84
27	* GERVINHO (IvC)	27.05.87
31	Ryo MIYAICHI (Jap)	04.12.92
15	Alex OXLADE-CHAMBERLAIN	15.08.93
9	* PARK Chu-young (SKo)	10.07.85
10	* Robin VAN PERSIE (Hol)	06.08.83
14	Theo WALCOTT	16.03.89

MANAGER

Arsene WENGER (Fra)	22.10.49

ASTON VILLA

GOALKEEPERS

1	Shay GIVEN (RoI)	20.04.76
22	* Bradley GUZAN (USA)	09.09.84
33	Andrew MARSHALL	14.04.75

DEFENDERS

32	Nathan BAKER	23.04.91
23	* Habib BEYE (Sen)	19.10.77
21	Ciaran CLARK (RoI)	26.09.89
6	James COLLINS (Wal)	23.08.83
24	* Carlos CUELLAR (Spa)	23.06.81
5	Richard DUNNE (RoI)	21.09.79
2	* Alan HUTTON (Sco)	30.11.84
30	Eric LICHAJ (USA)	17.11.88
34	Shane LOWRY (Aus)	12.06.89
3	Stephen WARNOCK	12.12.81

MIDFIELDERS

12	Marc ALBRIGHTON	18.11.89
25	* Barry BANNAN (Sco)	01.12.89
16	Fabian DELPH	21.11.89
38	Gary GARDNER	29.06.92
31	Chris HERD (Aus)	04.04.89
7	Stephen IRELAND (RoI)	22.08.86
8	Jermaine JENAS	18.02.83
10	Charles N'ZOGBIA (Fra)	28.05.86
19	* Stiliyian PETROV (Bul)	05.07.79

FORWARDS

11	Gabriel AGBONLAHOR	13.10.86
9	Darren BENT	06.02.84
14	Nathan DELFOUNESO	02.02.91
18	Emile HESKEY	11.01.78

MANAGER

Alex McLEISH (Sco)	21.01.59

BLACKBURN ROVERS

GOALKEEPERS

13	Mark BUNN	16.11.84
1	Paul ROBINSON	15.10.79

DEFENDERS

38	Myles ANDERSON	01.09.90
32	* BRUNO Ribeiro (Bra)	01.04.83
16	Scott DANN	14.02.67
5	* Gael GIVET (Fra)	09.10.81
31	Grant HANLEY (Sco)	20.11.91
39	Adam HENLEY (Wal)	14.06.94
6	* Ryan NELSEN (NZ)	18.10.77
3	Martin OLSSON (Swe)	17.05.88
2	* Michel SALGADO (Spa)	22.10.75
4	* Christopher SAMBA (Con)	28.03.84

MIDFIELDERS

37	Zac ALEY	17.08.91
8	David DUNN	27.12.79
10	* Mauro FORMICA (Arg)	04.04.88
11	* Vince GRELLA (Aus)	05.10.79
35	Jason LOWE	02.09.91
33	Josh MORRIS	30.09.91
15	* Steven N'ZONZI (Fra)	15.12.88
12	* Morten Gamst PEDERSEN (Nor)	08.09.81
14	* Radosav PETROVIC (Ser)	08.03.89
29	* Simon VUKCEVIC (Mne)	29.01.86

FORWARDS

22	Nick BLACKMAN	11.11.89
25	* David GOODWILLIE (Sco)	28.03.89
23	David HOILETT (Can)	05.06.90
30	Jason ROBERTS (Grn)	25.01.78
20	Ruben ROCHINA (Spa)	23.03.91
19	Jordan SLEW	07.09.92
24	* YAKUBU Ayegbeni (Nga)	22.11.82

MANAGER

Steve KEAN (Sco)	30.09.67

BOLTON WANDERERS

GOALKEEPERS

1	* Adam BOGDAN (Hun)	27.09.87
22	* Juusi JAASKELAINEN (Fin)	19.04.75

DEFENDERS

38	Adam BLAKEMAN	03.12.91
25	Dedryck BOYATA (Blg)	28.11.90
5	Gary CAHILL	19.12.85
33	Mark CONNOLLY (RoI)	16.12.91
12	Zat KNIGHT	02.05.80
3	MARCOS ALONSO (Spa)	28.12.90
15	Tyrone MEARS	18.02.83
18	Sam RICKETTS (Wal)	11.10.81
4	Paul ROBINSON	14.12.78
2	* Gretar Rafa STEINSSON (Ice)	09.01.82
31	David WHEATER	14.02.87

MIDFIELDERS

16	Mark DAVIES	18.02.88
7	Chris EAGLES	19.11.85
11	* Ricardo GARDNER (Jam)	25.09.78
8	* Stuart HOLDEN (USA)	01.08.85
6	Fabrice MUAMBA	06.04.88
10	* Martin PETROV (Bul)	15.01.79
21	Darren PRATLEY	22.04.85
19	Nigel REO-COKER	14.05.84

FORWARDS

20	Robbie BLAKE	04.03.76
14	Kevin DAVIES	26.03.77
34	Tom EAVES	14.01.92
28	Gael KAKUTA (Fra)	21.06.91
17	* Ivan KLASNIC (Cro)	29.01.80
24	* David N'GOG (Fra)	01.04.89
35	Tope OBADEYI	29.10.89
36	Michael O'HALLORAN (Sco)	06.01.91
9	* TUNCAY Sanli (Tur)	16.01.82

MANAGER

Owen COYLE (Sco)	14.07.66

CHELSEA

GOALKEEPERS

1	* Petr CECH (CzR)	20.05.82
40	* HILARIO (Por)	21.10.75
22	Ross TURNBULL	04.01.85

DEFENDERS

33	* ALEX (Bra)	17.06.82
34	Ryan BERTRAND	05.08.89
17	* Jose BOSINGWA (Por)	24.08.82
3	Ashley COLE	20.12.80
4	* DAVID LUIZ (Bra)	22.04.87
19	* Paulo FERREIRA (Por)	18.01.79
2	* Branislav IVANOVIC (Ser)	22.02.84
26	John TERRY	07.12.80

MIDFIELDERS

5	* Michael ESSIEN (Gha)	03.12.82
8	Frank LAMPARD	20.06.78
15	* Florent MALOUDA (Fra)	13.06.80
10	* Juan MATA (Spa)	28.04.88
20	Josh McEACHRAN	01.03.93
16	* Raul MEIRELES (Por)	17.03.83
12	* John Obi MIKEL (Nga)	22.04.87
7	* RAMIRES (Bra)	24.03.87
6	Oriol ROMEU (Spa)	24.09.91

FORWARDS

39	* Nicolas ANELKA (Fra)	14.03.79
11	* Didier DROGBA (IvC)	11.03.78
21	* Salomon KALOU (IvC)	05.08.85
18	Romelu LUKAKU (Blg)	13.05.93
23	Daniel STURRIDGE	01.09.89
9	* Fernando TORRES (Spa)	20.03.84

MANAGER

Andre VILLAS-BOAS (Por)	17.10.77

EVERTON

GOALKEEPERS

24	* Tim HOWARD (USA)	06.03.79
1	* Jan MUCHA (Slk)	05.12.82

DEFENDERS

3	Leighton BAINES	11.12.84
23	* Seamus COLEMAN	11.10.88
15	* Sylvain DISTIN (Fra)	16.12.77
5	* John HEITINGA (Hol)	15.11.83
2	Tony HIBBERT	20.02.81
6	Phil JAGIELKA	17.08.82
30	Shkodran MUSTAFI (Ger)	17.04.92
18	Phil NEVILLE	21.01.77

MIDFIELDERS

20	Ross BARKLEY	05.12.93
7	* Diniyar BILYALETDINOV (Rus)	27.02.85
17	Tim CAHILL (Aus)	06.12.79
10	* Royston DRENTHE (Hol)	08.04.87
25	* Marouane FELLAINI (Blg)	22.11.87
33	Adam FORSHAW	08.10.91
21	Leon OSMAN	17.05.81
26	Jack RODWELL	11.03.91
27	Apostolos VELLIOS (Gre)	08.01.92
38	James WALLACE	19.12.91

FORWARDS

28	Victor ANICHEBE (Nga)	23.04.88
37	Jose BAXTER	07.02.92
19	Magaye GUEYE (Fra)	06.07.90
40	Conor McALENY	12.08.92
8	* Louis SAHA (Fra)	08.08.78
11	* Denis STRACQUALURSI (Arg)	20.10.87

MANAGER

David MOYES (Sco)	25.04.63

FULHAM

GOALKEEPERS

38	Neil ETHERIDGE (Phi)	07.02.90
1	* Mark SCHWARZER (Aus)	06.10.72
22	* Csaba SOMOGYI (Hun)	07.04.85

DEFENDERS

6	Chris BAIRD (NI)	25.02.82
28	Matthew BRIGGS	06.03.91
26	* Zdenek GRYGERA (CzR)	14.05.80
5	* Brede HANGELAND (Nor)	20.06.81
18	Aaron HUGHES (NI)	08.11.79
2	Stephen KELLY (RoI)	06.09.83
3	* John Arne RIISE (Nor)	24.09.80
14	Philippe SENDEROS (Swi)	14.02.85

MIDFIELDERS

29	Simon DAVIES (Wal)	23.10.79
23	* Clint DEMPSEY (USA)	09.03.83
16	Damien DUFF (RoI)	02.03.79
20	Dickson ETUHU (Nga)	08.06.82
15	* Marcel GECOV (CzR)	01.01.88
10	Pajtim KASAMI (Swi)	02.06.90
13	Danny MURPHY	18.03.77
17	* Bjorn Helge RIISE (Nor)	21.06.83
4	Steve SIDWELL	14.12.82

FORWARDS

30	* Mousa DEMBELE (Blg)	17.07.87
8	Andy JOHNSON	10.02.81
11	* Bryan RUIZ (CR)	18.08.85
9	* Orlando SA (Por)	26.05.88
25	Bobby ZAMORA	16.01.81

MANAGER

Martin JOL (Hol)	16.01.56

LIVERPOOL

GOALKEEPERS

32	* DONI (Bra)	22.10.79
1	Brad JONES (Aus)	19.03.82
25	* Pepe REINA (Spa)	31.08.82

DEFENDERS

4	* Daniel AGGER (Den)	12.12.84
6	* Fabio AURELIO (Bra)	24.09.79
23	Jamie CARRAGHER	28.01.78
16	Sebastian COATES (Uru)	07.10.90
3	* Jose ENRIQUE (Spa)	23.01.86
38	John FLANAGAN	01.01.93
2	Glen JOHNSON	23.08.84
34	Martin KELLY	27.04.90
49	Jack ROBINSON	01.09.93
37	* Martin SKRTEL (Slk)	15.12.84
22	Danny WILSON (Sco)	27.12.91
48	Andre WISDOM	09.05.93

MIDFIELDERS

26	* Charlie ADAM (Sco)	10.12.85
19	Stewart DOWNING	22.07.84
8	Steven GERRARD	30.05.80
14	Jordan HENDERSON	17.06.90
21	* LUCAS Leiva (Bra)	09.01.87
10	* Maxi RODRIGUEZ (Arg)	02.01.81
33	Jonjo SHELVEY	27.02.92
20	Jay SPEARING	25.11.88
31	Raheem STERLING	08.12.94

FORWARDS

39	Craig BELLAMY (Wal)	13.07.79
9	Andy CARROLL	06.01.89
18	* Dirk KUYT (Hol)	22.07.80
7	* Luis SUAREZ (Uru)	24.01.87
30	SUSO (Spa)	19.11.93

MANAGER

Kenny DALGLISH (Sco)	04.03.51

MANCHESTER CITY

GOALKEEPERS

25	Joe HART	19.04.87
37	* Gunnar NIELSEN (Far)	07.10.86
30	* Costel PANTILIMON (Rom)	01.02.87
12	Stuart TAYLOR	28.11.80

DEFENDERS

3	Wayne BRIDGE	05.08.80
22	Gael CLICHY (Fra)	25.07.85
33	Greg CUNNINGHAM (RoI)	31.01.91
13	* Aleksandar KOLAROV (Ser)	10.11.85
4	* Vincent KOMPANY (Blg)	10.04.86
6	Joleon LESCOTT	16.08.82
24	Nedum ONUOHA	12.11.86
2	Micah RICHARDS	24.06.88
15	Stefan SAVIC (Mne)	08.01.91
28	* Kolo TOURE (IvC)	19.03.81
5	* Pablo ZABALETA (Arg)	16.01.85

MIDFIELDERS

18	Gareth BARRY	23.02.81
34	* Nigel DE JONG (Hol)	30.11.84
20	* Dwen HARGREAVES	20.01.81
11	Adam JOHNSON	14.07.87
7	James MILNER	04.01.86
19	* Samir NASRI (Fra)	26.06.87
62	Abdul RAZAK (IvC)	11.11.92
42	* Yaya TOURE (IvC)	13.05.83

FORWARDS

16	* Sergio AGUERO (Arg)	02.06.88
45	Mario BALOTELLI (Ita)	12.08.90
10	* Edin DZEKO (Bos)	17.03.86
43	Alex NIMELY	11.05.91
21	* David SILVA (Spa)	08.01.86
32	* Carlos TEVEZ (Arg)	05.02.84

MANAGER

Roberto MANCINI (Ita)	27.11.64

MANCHESTER UTD

GOALKEEPERS

40	Ben AMOS	10.04.90
1	David DE GEA (Spa)	07.11.90
29	* Tomasz KUSZCZAK (Pol)	20.03.82
34	* Anders LINDEGAARD (Den)	13.04.84

DEFENDERS

6	Johnny EVANS (NI)	03.01.88
3	* Patrice EVRA (Fra)	15.05.81
20	FABIO (Bra)	09.07.90
5	Rio FERDINAND	07.11.78
4	Phil JONES	21.02.92
42	Paul POGBA (Fra)	15.03.93
21	RAFAEL (Bra)	09.07.90
12	Chris SMALLING	22.11.89
15	* Nemanja VIDIC (Ser)	21.10.81

MIDFIELDERS

8	* ANDERSON (Bra)	13.04.88
16	Michael CARRICK	28.07.81
23	Tom CLEVERLEY	12.08.89
24	Darren FLETCHER (Sco)	01.02.84
28	Darron GIBSON (RoI)	25.10.87
11	Ryan GIGGS (Wal)	29.11.73
17	* NANI (Por)	17.11.86
13	* PARK Ji-sung (SKo)	25.02.81
25	* Antonio VALENCIA (Ecu)	05.08.85
18	Ashley YOUNG	09.07.85

FORWARDS

9	* Dimitar BERBATOV (Bul)	30.01.81
32	* Mame Biram DIOUF (Sen)	16.12.87
14	* Javier HERNANDEZ (Mex)	01.06.88
27	Federico MACHEDA (Ita)	22.08.91
7	Michael OWEN	14.12.79
10	Wayne ROONEY	24.10.85
19	Danny WELBECK	26.11.90

MANAGER

Alex FERGUSON (Sco)	31.12.41

NEWCASTLE UNITED

GOALKEEPERS

12	Rob ELLIOT (Rol)	30.04.86
1	Steve HARPER	14.03.75
26	Tim KRUL (Hol)	03.04.88
33	Ole SODERBERG (Swe)	20.07.90

DEFENDERS

2	* Fabricio COLOCCINI (Arg)	22.01.82
14	James PERCH	29.09.85
3	Davide SANTON (Ita)	02.01.91
5	Danny SIMPSON	04.01.87
16	Ryan TAYLOR	19.08.84
27	Steven TAYLOR	23.01.86
6	Mike WILLIAMSON	08.11.83

MIDFIELDERS

13	Mehdi ABEID (Fra)	06.08.92
10	* Hatem BEN ARFA (Fra)	07.03.87
4	* Yohan CABAYE (Fra)	14.01.86
32	Ryan DONALDSON	01.05.91
31	Shane FERGUSON (NI)	12.07.91
15	Dan GOSLING	02.02.90
8	Danny GUTHRIE	18.04.87
18	* Jonas GUTIERREZ (Arg)	05.07.82
22	* Sylvain MARVEAUX (Fra)	15.04.86
17	Alan SMITH	28.10.80
24	* Cheik TIOTE (IvC)	21.06.86
29	Haris VUCKIC (Sln)	21.08.92

FORWARDS

28	Sammy AMEOBI	01.05.92
23	Shola AMEOBI	12.10.81
19	* Demba BA (Sen)	25.05.85
20	Leon BEST (Rol)	19.09.86
11	* Peter LOVENKRANDS (Den)	29.01.80
25	* Gabriel OBERTAN (Fra)	26.02.89
30	Nile RANGER	11.04.91

MANAGER

Alan PARDEW	18.07.61

NORWICH CITY

GOALKEEPERS

13	Declan RUDD	16.01.91
1	John RUDDY	24.10.86

DEFENDERS

26	Daniel AYALA (Spa)	07.11.90
20	Leon BARNETT	30.11.85
24	Ritchie DE LAET (Blg)	28.11.88
3	Adam DRURY	29.08.78
28	Georgie FRANCOMB	08.09.91
2	Russell MARTIN (Sco)	04.01.86
25	Kyle NAUGHTON	11.11.88
23	Marc TIERNEY	23.08.85
22	Elliott WARD	19.01.85
6	Zak WHITBREAD (USA)	04.03.84

MIDFIELDERS

30	Matthew BALL (NI)	26.03.93
17	Elliott BENNETT	18.12.88
7	Andrew CROFTS (Wal)	29.05.84
29	Josh DAWKIN	16.01.92
15	David FOX	13.12.83
14	* Wes HOOLAHAN (Rol)	10.08.83
4	Bradley JOHNSON	28.04.87
19	* Simon LAPPIN (Sco)	25.01.83
12	Anthony PILKINGTON (Rol)	06.06.88
18	Korey SMITH	31.01.91
11	Andrew SURMAN	20.08.86

FORWARDS

9	Grant HOLT	12.04.81
10	Simeon JACKSON (Can)	28.03.87
16	Chris MARTIN	04.11.88
5	Steve MORISON (Wal)	29.08.83
8	James VAUGHAN	14.07.88
21	Aaron WILBRAHAM	21.10.79

MANAGER

Paul LAMBERT (Sco)	07.08.69

QPR

GOALKEEPERS

24	* Radek CERNY (CzR)	18.02.74
1	* Paddy KENNY (Rol)	17.05.78
26	* Brian MURPHY (Rol)	07.05.83

DEFENDERS

16	Matthew CONNOLLY	24.09.87
35	Anton FERDINAND	18.02.85
6	Danny GABBIDON (Wal)	08.08.79
5	Fitz HALL	20.12.80
40	Michael HARRIMAN (Rol)	23.10.92
3	Clint HILL	19.10.78
2	Bradley ORR	01.11.82
15	* Bruno PERONE (Bra)	06.07.87
13	Armand TRAORE (Sen)	08.10.89
18	Luke YOUNG	19.07.79

MIDFIELDERS

17	Joey BARTON	02.09.82
14	* Akos BUZSAKY (Hun)	07.05.82
4	Shaun DERRY	06.12.77
8	Kieron DYER	29.12.78
11	* Alejandro FAURLIN (Arg)	09.08.86
42	Jason PUNCHEON	26.06.86
21	Tommy SMITH	22.05.80
7	Adel TAARABT (Mor)	24.05.89
32	Shaun WRIGHT-PHILLIPS	25.10.81

FORWARDS

36	Bruno ANDRADE (Por)	02.10.93
10	Jay BOTHROYD	05.05.82
9	D.J. CAMPBELL	12.11.81
22	* Heidar HELGUSON (Ice)	22.08.77
30	Troy HEWITT	10.02.90
12	Jamie MACKIE (Sco)	22.09.85

MANAGER

Neil WARNOCK	01.12.48

STOKE CITY

GOALKEEPERS

1	Asmir BEGOVIC (Bos)	20.06.87
27	Carlo NASH	13.09.73
29	* Thomas SORENSEN (Den)	12.06.76

DEFENDERS

3	Danny HIGGINBOTHAM	29.12.78
4	Robert HUTH (Ger)	18.08.84
17	Ryan SHAWCROSS	04.10.87
30	Ryan SHOTTON	30.09.88
20	Matthew UPSON	18.04.79
28	Andy WILKINSON	06.08.84
39	Jonathan WOODGATE	22.01.80

MIDFIELDERS

32	* Diego ARISMENDI (Uru)	25.01.88
38	Florent CUVELIER (Blg)	12.09.92
24	Rory DELAP (Rol)	06.07.76
15	* Salif DIAO (Sen)	10.02.77
26	Matthew ETHERINGTON	14.08.81
40	* Wilson PALACIOS (Hnd)	29.07.84
16	Jermaine PENNANT	15.01.83
6	Glenn WHELAN (Rol)	13.01.84
18	Dean WHITEHEAD	12.01.82
12	Marc WILSON (Rol)	17.08.87

FORWARDS

25	Peter CROUCH	30.01.81
10	* Ricardo FULLER (Jam)	31.10.79
33	Cameron JEROME	14.08.86
9	* Kenwyne JONES (T&T)	05.10.84
11	* Mamady SIDIBE (Mli)	18.12.79
19	Jonathan WALTERS (Rol)	20.09.83

MANAGER

Tony PULIS (Wal)	16.01.55

SUNDERLAND

GOALKEEPERS

1	* Craig GORDON (Sco)	31.12.82
22	* Simon MIGNOLET (Blg)	06.03.88
20	Keiren WESTWOOD (Rol)	23.10.84

DEFENDERS

12	* Marcos ANGELERI (Arg)	04.07.83
2	Phil BARDSLEY (Sco)	28.06.85
19	Titus BRAMBLE	31.07.81
5	Wes BROWN	13.10.79
40	Louis LAING	06.09.93
16	John O'SHEA (Rol)	30.04.81
11	Kieran RICHARDSON	21.10.84
4	Michael TURNER	05.03.88

MIDFIELDERS

6	Lee CATTERMOLE	21.03.88
14	Jack COLBACK	24.10.89
26	Jordan COOK	20.03.90
27	* Ahmed ELMOHAMADY (Egy)	09.09.87
8	Craig GARDNER	25.11.86
7	Sebastian LARSSON (Swe)	06.06.85
23	* James McCLEAN (Rol)	22.04.89
18	* David MEYLER (Rol)	29.05.89
28	* Stephane SESSEGNON (Ben)	01.06.84
15	David VAUGHAN (Wal)	18.02.83

FORWARDS

52	Nicklas BENDTNER (Den)	16.01.88
9	Fraizer CAMPBELL	13.09.87
17	JI Dong-won (SKo)	28.05.91
21	Oumare TOUNKARA (Fra)	25.05.90
10	Connor WICKHAM	31.03.93

MANAGER

Steve BRUCE	31.12.60

SWANSEA CITY

GOALKEEPERS

21	* Jose MOREIRA (Por)	20.03.82
25	* Gerhard TREMMEL (Ger)	16.11.78
1	* Michel VORM (Hol)	20.10.83

DEFENDERS

20	* Fede BESSONE (Arg)	23.01.84
4	Steven CAULKER	29.12.91
16	Garry MONK	06.03.79
22	* Angel RANGEL (Spa)	26.10.82
5	Alan TATE	02.09.82
3	* Neil TAYLOR (Wal)	07.02.89
34	Joe WALSH (Wal)	15.05.92
2	Ashley WILLIAMS (Wal)	23.08.84

MIDFIELDERS

26	* Kemy AGUSTIEN (Hol)	20.08.86
23	Joe ALLEN (Wal)	14.03.90
6	* Ferrie BODDE (Hol)	04.05.82
7	Leon BRITTON	16.09.82
28	Thomas BUTLER (Rol)	25.04.81
17	David COTTERILL (Wal)	04.12.87
12	Nathan DYER	29.11.87
27	Mark GOWER	05.10.78
31	Lee LUCAS (Wal)	10.06.92
8	* Andrea ORLANDI (Spa)	03.08.84
29	Ashley RICHARDS (Wal)	12.04.91
15	Wayne ROUTLEDGE	07.01.85
11	Scott SINCLAIR	26.03.89

FORWARDS

9	* Craig BEATTIE (Sco)	16.01.84
14	* Stephen DOBBIE (Sco)	05.12.82
10	Danny GRAHAM	12.08.85
18	Leroy LITA	28.12.84
19	Luke MOORE	13.02.86

MANAGER

Brendan RODGERS (NI)	26.01.73

TOTTENHAM H'SPUR

GOALKEEPERS

23	* Carlo CUDICINI (Ita)	06.09.73
24	* Brad FRIEDEL (USA)	18.05.71
1	* Heurelho GOMES (Bra)	15.02.81

DEFENDERS

32	* Benoit ASSOU-EKOTTO (Cam)	24.03.84
19	* Sebastian BASSONG (Cam)	09.07.86
22	* Vedran CORLUKA (Cro)	09.02.86
20	Michael DAWSON	18.11.83
13	* William GALLAS (Fra)	17.08.77
26	Ledley KING	12.10.80
4	* Younes KABOUL (Fra)	04.01.86
28	Kyle WALKER	28.05.90

MIDFIELDERS

3	Gareth BALE (Wal)	16.07.89
6	Tom HUDDLESTONE	28.12.86
21	* Niko KRANJCAR (Cro)	13.08.84
7	Aaron LENNON	16.04.87
29	Jake LIVERMORE	14.11.89
14	* Luka MODRIC (Cro)	09.09.85
8	Scott PARKER	13.10.80
40	* Steven PIENAAR (SAf)	17.03.82
25	Danny ROSE	02.06.90
30	* SANDRO (Bra)	15.03.89
31	Andros TOWNSEND	16.07.91
11	* Rafael VAN DER VAART (Hol)	11.02.83

FORWARDS

10	* Emmanuel ADEBAYOR (Tog)	26.02.84
18	Jermain DEFOE	07.12.82
17	* Giovani DOS SANTOS (Mex)	11.05.89
9	* Roman PAVLYUCHENKO (Rus)	15.12.81

MANAGER

Harry REDKNAPP	02.03.47

WEST BROM

GOALKEEPERS

19	Luke DANIELS	05.01.88
1	Ben FOSTER	03.04.83
13	* Marton FULOP (Hun)	03.05.83

DEFENDERS

25	Craig DAWSON	06.05.90
18	* Gonzalo JARA (Chl)	29.08.85
28	Billy JONES	24.03.87
2	Joe MATTOCK	15.05.90
23	* Gareth McAULEY (NI)	05.12.79
3	* Jonas OLSSON (Swe)	10.03.83
20	Nicky SHOREY	19.02.81
30	* Gabriel TAMAS (Rom)	09.11.83

MIDFIELDERS

11	Chris BRUNT (NI)	14.12.84
17	* Graham DORRANS (Sco)	05.05.87
22	* Zoltan GERA (Hun)	22.04.79
27	Sam MANTOM	20.02.92
7	James MORRISON (Sco)	25.05.86
21	* Youssouf MULUMBU (DRC)	25.01.87
12	Steven REID (Rol)	10.03.81
33	* Paul SCHARNER (Aut)	11.03.80
5	* Somen TCHOYI (Cam)	29.03.83
29	George THORNE	04.01.93
14	Jerome THOMAS	23.03.83

FORWARDS

43	* Roman BEDNAR (CzR)	26.03.83
31	Simon COX (Rol)	28.04.87
32	* Marc-Antoine FORTUNE (Fra)	02.07.81
9	Shane LONG (Rol)	22.01.87
24	* Peter ODEMWINGIE (Nga)	15.07.81

MANAGER

Roy HODGSON	09.08.47

WIGAN ATHLETIC

GOALKEEPERS

26	* Ali AL HABSI (Oma)	30.12.81
1	Chris KIRKLAND	02.05.81
13	Lee NICHOLLS	05.10.92
12	Michael POLLITT	29.02.72

DEFENDERS

3	* Antolin ALCARAZ (Par)	30.07.82
17	Emmerson BOYCE (Bar)	24.09.79
43	Adam BUXTON	12.05.92
5	Gary CALDWELL (Sco)	12.04.82
31	* Maynor FIGUEROA (Hnd)	02.05.83
2	* Steve GOHOURI (IvC)	08.02.81
24	* Adrian LOPEZ (Spa)	08.01.88
23	* Ronnie STAM (Hol)	18.06.84
22	Patrick VAN AANHOLT (Hol)	03.07.88

MIDFIELDERS

7	* Albert CRUSAT (Spa)	13.05.82
21	* Mohamed DIAME (Sen)	14.06.87
14	* Jordi GOMEZ (Spa)	24.05.85
19	David JONES	04.11.84
10	* Shaun MALONEY (Sco)	24.01.83
16	* James McARTHUR (Sco)	07.10.87
4	James McCARTHY (Rol)	12.11.90
6	* Hendry THOMAS (Hnd)	23.02.85
8	Ben WATSON	09.07.85

FORWARDS

9	* Franco DI SANTO (Arg)	07.04.89
15	Callum McMANAMAN	25.04.91
11	Victor MOSES (Nga)	12.12.90
20	* Hugo RODALLEGA (Col)	25.07.85
18	* Conor SAMMON (Rol)	13.04.87

MANAGER

Roberto MARTINEZ (Spa)	13.07.73

WOLVERHAMPTON W

GOALKEEPERS

1	Wayne Hennessey (Wal)	24.01.87
13	Carl Ikeme (Nga)	08.06.86
31	* Dorus De Vries (Hol)	29.12.80

DEFENDERS

2	George Elokobi (Cam)	31.01.86
5	Richard Stearman	19.08.87
6	Jody Craddock	25.07.75
14	Roger Johnson	28.04.83
16	* Christophe Berra (Sco)	31.01.85
23	* Ronald Zubar (Fra)	20.09.85
30	Matt Doherty (Rol)	16.01.92
32	Kevin Foley (Rol)	01.11.84

MIDFIELDERS

4	David Edwards (Wal)	03.02.86
7	Michael Kightly	24.01.86
8	Karl Henry	26.11.82
11	* Stephen Ward (Rol)	20.08.85
12	Stephen Hunt (Rol)	01.08.80
17	Matt Jarvis	22.05.86
19	Adam Hammill	25.01.88
20	* Nenad Milijas (Ser)	30.04.83
24	Jamie O'Hara	25.09.86
34	* Adlene Guedioura (Alg)	12.11.85

FORWARDS

9	Sylvan Ebanks-Blake	29.03.86
10	* Steven Fletcher (Sco)	26.03.87
18	Sam Vokes (Wal)	21.10.89
29	* Kevin Doyle (Rol)	18.09.83

MANAGER

Mick McCARTHY (Rol)	07.02.59

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THE GREAT TEAMS

SANTOS 1962

With Pele as their figurehead, the Brazilian side were the first from South America to earn global recognition in the modern era

At their peak... Santos, with Pele (front, second from right), in 1962

In 1956, a timid 15-year-old named Edson Arantes do Nascimento visited Santos for a trial. The professional clubs of his home city of Sao Paulo had rejected him, but Santos coach Lula spotted something and within months "Pele" had made his first-team debut.

With Pele leading the way, Santos were irresistible, winning five successive Brazilian titles (1961 to 1965), plus two Libertadores Cups and two World Club Cups, both in 1962 and 1963.

Their performance in the second leg of the 1962 World Club Cup, against European champions Benfica in Lisbon, saw Santos at their peak. Leading 3-2 from the first game, they confounded the predictions of European observers in the second leg by blowing Benfica away, winning 5-2 on the night with Pele scoring a hat-trick.

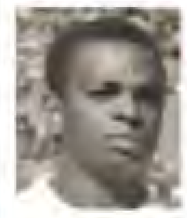
Eric Batty wrote in *World Soccer*'s February 1963 edition: "The Santos brand of soccer is an exhibition of craft and skill; a soccer circus with ringmaster Zito [the captain] cracking his whip now and again to insist they score goals."

Victory over Milan in 1963 saw Santos retain their world title, but after losing to Independiente in the semi-finals of the 1964 Libertadores Cup they abandoned continental competition in favour of lucrative friendlies, using the income to surround Pele and their home-grown youngsters with new faces.

Had Santos continued to compete in the Libertadores Cup, they would surely have won many more trophies. **WS**

THE FIRST XI

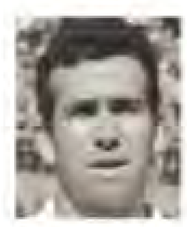
Gilmar
Goalkeeper
Brazil international who played in the 1958 and 1962 World Cups. Signed from Corinthians.



Lima
Right-back
Could also play further forward and went on to make almost 700 appearances for the club.

Mauro
Centre-back
Captain of Brazil's national side at the 1962 World Cup in Chile. Signed from Sao Paulo.

Calvet
Centre-back
Signed from Gremio, he was another Brazil international.

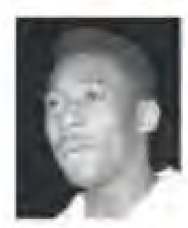


Dalmo
Left-back
Scored the winning goal in the 1963 world club play-off against Milan.

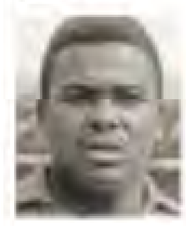
Zito
Midfielder
Captain. Performed a defensive role but also loved to attack.

Mengalvio
Midfielder
Schemer and understudy to Didi in Brazil's 1962 World Cup squad.

Dorval
Right-winger
Has been compared to Stanley Matthews for his dribbling technique.



Pele
Forward
Santos debut at 16, World Cup winner at 17, and a global superstar by his early 20s.



Coutinho
Centre-forward
Enjoyed an almost telepathic relationship with strike partner Pele.

Pepe
Left-winger
Packed a fierce shot. Went on to coach Santos for a brief period.

THE COACH AND HIS TEAM

Lula
Luis Alonso Perez, better known as "Lula", was one of Brazil's most successful club coaches, winning several trophies in a 12-year spell at Santos. He gave Pele his debut aged 16 and oversaw the integration of numerous youngsters into the side. Although overshadowed by Pele, Lula was a key figure in Santos' golden era. When asked whether Pele was the greatest player he had coached, Lula replied: "Pele is the greatest anyone has ever coached." He joined Corinthians in 1968 and died in June 1972.

Dream team...Lula (right) and Pele

The formation
Under Lula, Santos were quick to develop the 4-2-4 formation that had emerged in Brazil in the 1950s and with which the national side would win the World Cup in 1958. Pele and Coutinho were the two central front men and enjoyed a close partnership, with Pele often dropping deep before moving forward to exchange passes with his team-mates. Dorval and Pepe were mesmerising wingers, with the two central midfielders, Mengalvio and Zito, both having a licence to join the attack.

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